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S'pore to discuss issues with KL calmly, but will guard its turf: Vivian

Countries can expect consequences if they embark on 'antics' against Republic, he says

Linette Lai
Political Correspondent

Singapore will do its best to discuss all outstanding bilateral issues with Malaysia in a calm, reasonable and focused manner, Foreign Minister Vivian Balakrishnan told Parliament yesterday. But he warned of "consequences" if other nations embarked on "adventures and antics" against it.

Dr Balakrishnan also said he does not expect a quick or smooth resolution to these issues with Malaysia, which include disputes over maritime and airspace boundaries.

Last October, Malaysia unilaterally extended the Johor Baru port limits into Singapore's territorial waters off Tuas. It has also objected to the implementation of new landing procedures for Seletar Airport.

"Both of these sets of sudden actions upset the status quo that has been in place for many years," Dr Balakrishnan said in his statement, where he set out the facts of each issue and highlighted steps that both sides have taken to find a constructive way forward. "These actions did not bode well for our bilateral relationship. They created the risk of a dangerous downward spiral of mea-

sures and counter-measures."

On Malaysia's extension of port limits, he said it goes beyond even the territorial sea claims in its 1979 map, which Singapore has rejected consistently. "The inescapable conclusion is that the new Johor Baru port limits transgress into what are indisputably Singapore territorial waters," said the minister, highlighting how Singapore has long exercised sovereignty and patrolled the disputed waters without any protest from Malaysia.

He also pointed out that daily intrusions into these waters by Malaysian government vessels since November have continued despite the Malaysian Foreign Ministry declaring that it would take "all effective measures" to de-escalate the situation on the ground. "These intru-

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S'pore to review adoption law and look into surrogacy issue.
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sions do not help Malaysia's legal case. All they do is to raise tensions and endanger navigational safety in the area," he said.

Dr Balakrishnan and his Malaysian counterpart had agreed last week to form a working group to discuss matters and de-escalate the situation in the waters off Tuas.

While Singapore believes that maritime boundary delimitation is best resolved through negotiations, it is prepared to settle disputes via an ap-

propriate international third party dispute settlement procedure if such negotiations fail, he said.

Replying to a question from Mr Vikram Nair (Sembawang GRC) on what actions Singapore could take if there were further intrusions into its waters, Dr Balakrishnan said: "We will always take appropriate measures to safeguard our interest, and any country dealing with Singapore must not assume that it is cost-free to embark on any adventures or antics against us. There will be consequences."

He also addressed the 1962 Water Agreement, which Malaysia wants to revise. The attorneys-general on both sides had met last month to better understand each other's position on whether Malaysia still had the right to review the price of water,

but it was overshadowed by other issues that subsequently arose. They will meet again to continue discussions, he said.

The transport ministers from both countries have also agreed to meet later this month for further discussions on the airspace dispute.

MPs had filed 14 questions on the disputes with Malaysia, and seven members had supplementary questions for Dr Balakrishnan.

Concluding his speech, he said: "The strength of Singapore's diplomacy depends on domestic unity and resilience, and the fact that we cannot be intimidated or bought."

This is why Total Defence and investment in the Singapore Armed Forces are so important, he added.

Resilience, he said, includes improving Singapore's water supply infrastructure, namely Newater and desalinated water, strengthening food security by diversifying food sources, and ensuring a strong, diversified labour market.

As a small state with limited resources, the quest for security and resilience has been "a constant, relentless imperative" since independence, Dr Balakrishnan noted.

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Bangkok faces a polluted new year



Thailand is set to deploy cloud-seeding planes, South Korea is stopping old cars from being driven on the road and Britain wants to phase out diesel-only trains as nations fight back to reduce air pollution shrouding their cities at the start of the new year. Bangkok (left) has been hit by persistent smog caused by a mix of exhaust from vehicles, the burning of fields by farmers outside the city and pollutants from factories. PHOTO: EPA-EFE

[SEE WORLD A10](#)

CapitaLand buying Temasek unit Ascendas-Singbridge in \$11b deal

Grace Leong
Business Correspondent

CapitaLand is acquiring Temasek subsidiary Ascendas-Singbridge (ASB) in a deal valued at \$11 billion, including debt, to create Asia's largest diversified real estate group.

After the transaction, the group's combined total assets under management (AUM) will exceed \$116 billion across more than 30 countries, and cover asset classes such as business parks, and commercial, retail and residential properties.

The deal will make the combined group the ninth largest real estate investment manager globally, up from CapitaLand's current 14th place.

Mr Lee Chee Koon, president and

group chief executive of CapitaLand, said: "Geographically, the deal strengthens CapitaLand's presence in our core markets of Singapore and China, while adding meaningful scale in India, the United States and Europe. This deal immediately adds a portfolio of operating assets that contribute income, while adding a sizeable pipeline of development projects for the future."

CapitaLand group chief financial officer Andrew Lim said the proposed deal will allow it to "compete globally for blue chip capital partners and funding".

Under the terms of the agreement, Temasek will receive \$6 billion – half in cash and half in new CapitaLand shares, boosting Temasek's ownership of CapitaLand from around

40.8 per cent to about 51 per cent.

The new CapitaLand shares will be priced at \$3.50 apiece, representing a premium of 11.3 per cent, over CapitaLand's one-month volume-weighted average price of \$3.1447.

Ascendas and Singbridge have a combined enterprise value of some \$10.9 billion, comprising \$6 billion of equity value and \$4.9 billion of net debt and minority interest.

The deal is expected to be completed by the third quarter of this year. It will have to be approved by CapitaLand's independent shareholders at an extraordinary general meeting by the first half of this year.

Gibson Dunn & Crutcher partner Robson Lee noted that Temasek will remain the single largest shareholder of CapitaLand after the deal,

with the right to appoint management. "The difference is that the risks and rewards of Temasek's equity stake in CapitaLand will increase post-merger," Mr Lee said.

The deal would strengthen Temasek's ability to undertake mega township projects in developing countries, he said, with CapitaLand, Surbana Jurong, Sembcorp Development and Keppel Land in its stable of subsidiaries.

ASB chairman Wong Kan Seng said: "The combined scale and expertise of the group will enable it to better capitalise on the opportunities arising from the rapid pace of urbanisation in the region. ASB's established relationships with local governments and business communities will also enable the group to

develop urban solutions that address local initiatives and requirements across the region."

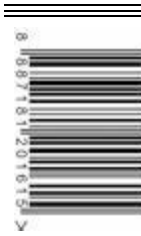
ASB's business presence spans 11 countries including Singapore, China, India, Australia, Britain and the US. More than 80 per cent of ASB's \$23.6 billion AUM is in business spaces. Its flagship projects include Singapore Science Park and Changi Business Park here; International Tech Park Bangalore and International Tech Park Chennai in India; and Dalian Ascendas IT Park and Singapore Hangzhou Science and Tech Park in China.

The combined group's number of CBD and suburban offices will grow from 39 to 83 properties across 10 countries, with a total gross floor area of nearly 27 million sq ft. Capita-

Land said the deal will boost its historical pro forma fee income by over 40 per cent from \$238 million to \$337 million. Shares of CapitaLand last traded at \$3.27 on Friday. The company requested lifting of a trading halt after market close yesterday.

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10 must-reads for today

1 Jet's voice recorder found

The cockpit voice recorder from a Lion Air jet that crashed last October was recovered from the Java Sea yesterday. Investigators hope the discovery will provide more answers on the cause of the Boeing 737 MAX jet's crash shortly after its take-off from Jakarta, killing all 189 people on board. **WORLD A12**



Indonesian navy commander Rear-Admiral Yudo Margono holding the cockpit voice recorder that was recovered yesterday. PHOTO: ANTARA

2 Vivian on S'pore-KL issues

Foreign Minister Vivian Balakrishnan said in Parliament that Singapore will do its best to discuss in a calm, reasonable and focused manner all outstanding bilateral issues with Malaysia. But he stressed that he does not expect the issues to be resolved quickly or smoothly. **TOP OF THE NEWS A1**

4 Beijing's drive to go green

Beijing is ramping up efforts to make the city greener by taking diesel trucks off the roads, building more parks and clamping down harder on coal burning. The measures were presented by Mayor Chen Jining as part of the city government's work report for this year. **WORLD A11**

5 The power of forgiveness

The act of forgiving frees not just the transgressor from the wrong done, but also the victim from being caught in a grip of toxic anger, says Professor Chong Siow Ann of the Institute of Mental Health. **OPINION A15**

6 Shipper cleared of charges

Freight forwarder Megastar has been cleared by the Court of Appeal of trademark infringement by shipping fakes of luxury brands Louis Vuitton and Burberry. The court found the Singapore-based company did not know what the goods were and was merely providing its normal service. **HOME B3**



Mr Azmin Ali meeting Transport Minister Khaw Boon Wan yesterday. PHOTO: KHAW BOON WAN/FACEBOOK

3 S'pore, Malaysia affirm ties

Malaysia's Economic Affairs Minister Azmin Ali has concluded a two-day visit to Singapore to meet leaders here, with both governments affirming a desire to maintain good ties. Mr Azmin's visit took place despite the postponement of a joint annual meeting that was meant to take place yesterday. **TOP OF THE NEWS A4**

7 Questioned by Bali police

Two police officers from Bali tried to take an Indonesian businessman recovering in a hospital here back to the island. Mr Hartono Karjadi claimed he refused to go with the officers, who were here over a civil dispute with another Indonesian businessman. Singapore police said they did not receive a request from the Indonesian police for the visit. **HOME B6**

8 Construction demand high

Construction demand is expected to remain strong this year due to sustained public sector contracts. Total construction demand, which is the value of construction contracts to be awarded, is expected to be between \$27 billion and \$32 billion this year. **BUSINESS C1**

9 Ridhwan's bout on after all

Singapore's top boxer Muhammad Ridhwan says he is not retiring and is fully focused on his WBC silver bout against Namibian Paulus Ambunda on March 29 – a rematch of their last fight he lost in a split decision. He says a mix of factors brought "a new kind of pressure", but his team are "now aligned towards the same goal". **SPORT C10**

10 Works by pioneer artist

Some may be familiar with pioneer artist Cheong Soo Pieng's Drying Salted Fish painting, which appears on the back of Singapore's \$50 note, but he also produced abstract pieces. Some of these works will be on display at STPI – Creative Workshop & Gallery from Saturday to March 9. **LIFE D3**

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VIDEO

Turtles' big move

The Live Turtle and Tortoise Museum moved to its new home in Yishun last Tuesday. Find out how some 500 sensitive, slow-moving creatures were carefully moved to their new digs. <http://str.sg/seeshells>



PODCAST

Life Picks

What should you do on Jan 18 – catch zombie movie One Cut Of The Dead, which is part of the Japanese Film Festival, or attend the Singapore Symphony Orchestra's 40th anniversary gala? We help you make a choice. <http://str.sg/lifepicks17>

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Foreign Minister Vivian Balakrishnan and Malaysia's Economic Affairs Minister Azmin Ali taking a stroll along the Singapore River after dinner on Sunday. Dr Balakrishnan said they had "an open and candid discussion of the issues currently confronting us" and reaffirmed that there are "far more opportunities for Malaysia and Singapore to work together", while Mr Azmin described their meeting as "productive... as we work towards resolving some bilateral issues". PHOTO: VIVIAN BALAKRISHNAN/FACEBOOK

S'pore, KL affirm desire to maintain good ties

Visiting Malaysian minister holds talks with leaders here despite postponement of JMC meeting

Malaysia's Economic Affairs Minister Azmin Ali was scheduled to jointly chair a meeting on bilateral cooperation for Iskandar Malaysia with Singapore's National Development Minister Lawrence Wong here yesterday.

But the meeting of the Joint Ministerial Committee (JMC) for Iskandar Malaysia was postponed last week following Johor Menteri Besar Osman Sapian's intrusion into Singapore territorial waters.

Nevertheless, Datuk Seri Azmin made a two-day visit that saw both governments affirming a desire to maintain good ties to benefit their interdependent economies.

Mr Azmin met Mr Wong over breakfast yesterday morning before meeting Coordinating Minister for Infrastructure and Minister for Transport Khaw Boon Wan. He also met Foreign Minister Vivian Balakrishnan on Sunday.

All four leaders have since posted on their respective social media channels about putting "bilateral relations back on track" and working towards the mutual benefit of the two neighbours.

Mr Azmin said in a Facebook post after his meeting with Mr Wong that they had "a frank and positive discussion on bilateral issues concerning Singapore and Malaysia".

Mr Wong said on Facebook that they had a good breakfast meeting. "I am glad that minister Azmin continued with his visit to Singapore to meet with us, and to discuss ways to put our bilateral relations on track," he said.

"The JMC has met for more than 10 years and has overseen many projects, including joint investment and tourism promotion," added Mr Wong. "These projects have been mutually beneficial because our economies are closely intertwined and highly interdependent. That is why we both want good and stable bilateral relations, so that both sides can do more together to spur each other's development and success."

Dr Balakrishnan, who had dinner with Mr Azmin on Sunday and thereafter a stroll together along the Singapore River, said in a Facebook post: "We had an open and candid discussion of the issues currently confronting us. We reaffirmed that there are far more opportunities for Malaysia and Singapore to work together, especially at this time of global economic transformation."

In a Facebook post, Mr Azmin, a senior minister in Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad's Cabinet, described their meeting as "productive... as we work towards resolving some bilateral issues".

The postponement of the JMC meeting was the latest in a string of bilateral hiccups since Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad returned to power following an unprecedented change of government last May.

The maritime dispute was sparked when, on Oct 25, Malaysia unilaterally extended the Johor



National Development Minister Lawrence Wong (left) and Mr Azmin Ali met over breakfast yesterday, after which Mr Azmin called on Coordinating Minister for Infrastructure and Transport Minister Khaw Boon Wan (below right). PHOTOS: AZMIN ALI/FACEBOOK, KHAW BOON WAN/FACEBOOK



Baru port limits to encroach on Singapore territorial waters. The foreign ministers of both countries met in Singapore last Tuesday and agreed to resolve their bilateral airspace and maritime disputes in a calm and constructive manner.

But after Datuk Osman boarded a Malaysian government vessel to visit another vessel anchored illegally in Singapore's territorial waters off Tuas, Singapore protested against the intrusion in a diplomatic note and proposed to postpone the JMC meeting, Malaysia agreed.

Dr Balakrishnan explained to Parliament yesterday that the intrusion went against the spirit of the foreign ministers' agreement. He said: "It undermined the goodwill and trust necessary for further cooperation between the two countries, especially cooperation involving Johor. It made it untenable to proceed with the JMC meeting."

Mr Osman would also have been involved in the JMC meeting. "But, most regrettably, the Menterri Besar staged a publicised

visit to the Malaysian Marine Department vessel anchored in Singapore territorial waters off Tuas on Jan 9, 2019," Dr Balakrishnan said.

The postponed meeting would have been the 14th for the JMC, which was set up in 2007 for both sides to work together in the South Johor economic zone of Iskandar, on areas from transport to tourism.

This includes the Kuala Lumpur-Singapore High-Speed Rail (HSR) and the Rapid Transit System (RTS) linking Woodlands and Johor Baru. Mr Khaw said of their meeting in a Facebook post: "He is aware of the unnecessary disputes at Tuas and Seletar. We share a common desire to bring bilateral relations back on track, so that good projects, like the RTS Link between Woodlands and JB, can materialise, to benefit both our peoples."

EXPECT CONSEQUENCES

We will always take appropriate measures to safeguard our interests. And any country dealing with Singapore must not assume that it is cost-free to embark on any adventures or antics against us. There will be consequences.



FOREIGN MINISTER VIVIAN BALAKRISHNAN, speaking in Parliament yesterday.

TOEING FINE LINE

I hope members appreciate this fine line that I am trying to follow – to be resolute but to be calm, to quietly but clearly protect our interests. And it doesn't mean we do not have sharp elbows.



DR BALAKRISHNAN, responding to Mr Vikram Nair (Sembawang GRC).

MEGAPHONE DIPLOMACY NOT THE WAY

Red lines are not something you draw lightly and not something which you should pronounce publicly without having carefully thought through all the consequences and without communicating those considerations clearly and unambiguously with the person you are negotiating with or the other side, and I hope members of this House and Singaporeans will understand that some of these are best conducted behind the scenes quietly, and that is why I do not believe in megaphone diplomacy.



DR BALAKRISHNAN, responding to Mr Alex Yam (Marsiling-Yew Tee GRC).

Intrusion by Johor's MB goes against spirit of agreement: Minister

The intrusion by Johor's Menteri Besar into Singapore waters off Tuas last Wednesday went against the spirit of the agreement concluded by the foreign ministers of both countries just a day earlier.

Stressing the point in Parliament yesterday, Foreign Minister Vivian Balakrishnan said: "It undermined the goodwill and trust necessary for further cooperation between the two countries, especially cooperation involving Johor. It made it untenable to proceed with the JMC (Joint Ministerial Committee) meeting."

The 14th JMC for Iskandar Malaysia was to have been held yesterday as part of ways both sides can cooperate to develop the Iskandar Development Region in Johor.

But on the eve of the meeting, Singapore's Foreign Affairs Ministry said Datuk Osman Sapian's presence on a Malaysian vessel in Singapore's territory last Wednesday had made the meeting untenable. Yesterday, Dr Balakrishnan said the meeting was to have been chaired by National Development Minister Lawrence Wong and Malaysian Minister for Economic Affairs, Azmin Ali, involving Singapore and Malaysia's ministers and officials, and Johor officials, including Mr Osman.

"But most regrettably, the Menterri Besar staged a publicised visit to the Malaysian Marine Department vessel anchored in Singapore territorial waters off Tuas on Jan 9, 2019," he added. Mr Osman had posted on Facebook later the same day about his visit to the vessel.

Singapore formally protested against the intrusion via a Third Person Note to Malaysia, and proposed postponing the meeting, Malaysia agreed.

Dr Balakrishnan said he informed Malaysian Foreign Minister Saifuddin Abdullah and Datuk Azmin of the postponement. "I should add that my discussions with both ministers, before and after the Johor Menteri Besar's actions, have been amicable and constructive, focused on trying to resolve the issues.

Datuk Azmin met me yesterday. He also met ministers Khaw Boon Wan (Coordinating Minister for Infrastructure and Minister for Transport) and Lawrence Wong today to discuss several bilateral projects which he is in charge of."

Despite the difficulties, Dr Balakrishnan said Singapore still hopes to work with Malaysia for better ties and closer cooperation. "However, both sides must act in good faith, in compliance with international law and norms, and honour existing agreements," he said.

Karamjit Kaur



PHOTO: SINGAPORE POLICE FORCE

REGRETTABLE INCIDENT

Most regrettably, the Menterri Besar staged a publicised visit to the Malaysian Marine Department vessel anchored in Singapore territorial waters off Tuas on Jan 9, 2019.



FOREIGN MINISTER VIVIAN BALAKRISHNAN, on the Johor Menteri Besar's visit (above) to the vessel last Wednesday.

Others should not take S'pore's consistency for granted: Minister

Republic may take calm approach but that does not mean it is passive, says Vivian

Karamjit Kaur
Senior Correspondent

Countries dealing with Singapore should not take the Republic's consistency, and what some would say predictability, for granted, Foreign Minister Vivian Balakrishnan said.

"We will always take appropriate measures to safeguard our interests. And any country dealing with Singapore must not assume that it is cost-free to embark on any adventures or antics against us."

"There will be consequences," he stressed.

Speaking in Parliament yesterday on current Singapore-Malaysia tensions over territorial waters and airspace issues, Dr Balakrishnan said it was the reason Singapore postponed a planned meeting between National Development Minister Lawrence Wong and Malaysian Minister for Economic Affairs Azmin Ali, as well as officials on both sides.

The Joint Ministerial Committee (JMC) for the development of Iskandar Malaysia was scheduled to meet yesterday.

Singapore postponed it after an

intrusion by Johor's Menteri Besar Osman Sapian, who had visited a Malaysian vessel in Singapore's territory last Wednesday. The act went against the spirit of an agreement concluded by the foreign ministers of both countries just a day earlier.

Dr Balakrishnan told the House: "I hope members appreciate this fine line that I am trying to follow – to be resolute but to be calm, to quietly but clearly protect our interests. And it doesn't mean we do not have sharp elbows."

He was replying to Mr Vikram Nair (Sembawang GRC) who, while commending the Government's calm and sensible approach to the tensions, was concerned that Malaysia's actions were not consistent.

"If one side is being sincere (but the other side is not or is not able to follow through with actions, what can we do?" he asked.

Echoing a similar sentiment, Mr Alex Yam (Marsiling-Yew Tee GRC) noted that each time Malaysia commits a provocative act, Singapore is firm, saying "don't do it again".

But will the time come when Singapore will make it clear that further provocation will be met with an equal reaction, he asked.

Dr Balakrishnan said: "I want to clear up this confusion that they are the ones who have the licence to provoke and that we respond, but without an equal and opposite response."

But he cautioned: "Red lines are not something you draw lightly and not something which you should pronounce publicly without having carefully thought through all the consequences and without commu-



Republic of Singapore Navy littoral mission vessel RSS Justice (right) and the Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency vessel KM Marudu (far left), which was anchored within the Singapore port limits. PHOTO: SINGAPORE POLICE FORCE

nicating those considerations clearly and unambiguously with the person you are negotiating with or the other side, and I hope members of this House and Singaporeans will understand that some of these are best conducted behind the scenes quietly, and that is why I do not believe in megaphone diplomacy."

In the end, it is Singapore's reputation for consistency and constancy that adds to the Republic's reputation of reliability and integrity.

Different factors are at play when

"So, that is the way we deal," Dr Balakrishnan said.

"Sometimes it may come across as we are boringly consistent and we seem to studiously avoid chest thumping and other manifestations of nationalism. But I would submit that this is the appropriate posture for a small, tiny nation state like Singapore."

It does not mean Singapore is passive or is giving in, he added.

Different factors are at play when

Vivian debunks KL's claims that Seletar ILS will affect Pasir Gudang



ALLEGATIONS UNTRUE

There were allegations that Pasir Gudang will not be able to have buildings taller than five storeys because of ILS, but if members cross the Causeway and drive around Pasir Gudang, you will see there are already structures as tall as 105m there (taller than many HDB blocks).



FOREIGN MINISTER VIVIAN BALAKRISHNAN, on Malaysia's protest against the Instrument Landing System.

The new Instrument Landing System (ILS) uses the exact same flight path that aircraft landing at Seletar Airport (left) have used all along for visual flight-rise developments in the ILS, pilots can land even in bad weather, says Foreign Minister Vivian Balakrishnan. ST PHOTO: KEVIN LIM

Amid the tensions, the Malaysian civil aviation authority declared on Dec 25 a permanent restricted area in the airspace over Pasir Gudang for the purpose of military activities, with effect from Jan 2. What it meant was that flights from any country, including Malaysia, would need the prior approval of the Royal Malaysian Air Force to operate in that zone between 2,000 ft (610m) and 5,000 ft.

Malaysia's action contravened established International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) procedures, Dr Balakrishnan said.

"CAAS, as the air traffic services provider for the area, was neither informed nor consulted even though these actions affected civil aviation operations out of Seletar Airport, cut through an established international aviation route, and affected flight efficiency and safety," Dr Balakrishnan stressed.

At last week's meeting between

the two countries' foreign ministers, both sides agreed that while Singapore would suspend the implementation of the ILS procedures for Seletar Airport, Malaysia would also suspend the permanent restricted area. They will do so for one month in the first instance.

The mutual suspension, which went into effect at midnight on Jan 9, allows for normal operations to resume at Seletar Airport, Dr Balakrishnan said.

"Unfortunately, Malaysia's Firefly will still be unable to start operating at Seletar due to its Malaysian regulator's requirement," he added.

Apart from the ILS issue, Malaysia has said that it intends to review the 1974 Operational Letter of Agreement on airspace arrangements in southern Johor.

The agreement says that Singapore will manage the airspace which covers the Pasir Gudang area.

Singapore had said that it would re-

view the proposal after receiving it. Dr Balakrishnan said: "Such discussions on air navigation arrangements involve consultations with international stakeholders, and cannot be done overnight."

In the meantime, in the interest of civil aviation safety, air traffic operations must continue according to current arrangements, and in accordance with ICAO requirements."

Karamjit Kaur

RTS Link behind schedule, likely to be delayed: Khaw

Linette Lai

Political Correspondent

The planned Rapid Transit System (RTS) Link between Johor Baru and Singapore is "behind schedule and not progressing well", Transport Minister Khaw Boon Wan said yesterday.

This means the start of cross-border MRT services – which were intended to ease congestion at land checkpoints – will likely be delayed beyond the original target date of Dec 31, 2024, he said.

He was responding in a written parliamentary reply to Mr Ang Wei

Neng (Jurong GRC), who had asked for a progress update on the RTS.

Mr Khaw, who is also Coordinating Minister for Infrastructure, said several milestones set out in the legally binding RTS Link bilateral agreement inked in January last year have been missed.

A joint venture comprising Singapore's SMRT and Malaysia's Prasarana Malaysia Berhad should have been formed by June 30 last year. It should then have been appointed as the RTS Link operator through a concession agreement with Singapore's Land Transport Authority (LTA) and the Malaysian gov-

ernment by last September.

But over the past few months, Malaysia has indicated that it is considering replacing its joint venture partner – first until September last year, then December. On Dec 28, it requested to be given until Feb 28 this year to do so.

"As a result of these delays, the joint venture company has not even been incorporated to date, let alone signed the concession agreement," Mr Khaw said.

"Meanwhile, Malaysia has also unilaterally suspended bilateral discussions to appoint the RTS Link opera-

tor since August 2018, pending its confirmation of the Malaysian joint venture partner."

Under the bilateral agreement, both countries are obliged to jointly call a fair, international and transparent open tender to appoint an operating company if this has not been done by the original deadlines, or if the joint venture company has not been incorporated – unless both governments mutually agree to postpone these deadlines.

In November, Singapore sent draft tender documents to Malaysia, but has not received a response. This means there is a "real risk" that both

countries will not be ready to call a joint open tender by March 31, Mr Khaw said.

Missing this deadline may in turn lead to the appointed operating company being unable to procure the Thomson-East Coast Line core systems for the RTS before these procurement options expire, he added.

Mr Khaw noted that the LTA has assembled nearly 70 staff to implement the RTS. Civil tenders have also been called, including to build Singapore's RTS Link Woodlands North station and its portion of the RTS Link crossing bridge.

He added that Singapore has been

reasonable and flexible "because we understand Malaysia's circumstances following the May 2018 Malaysian general elections". But there are "serious implications" to missing the agreed deadlines and thereafter failing to engage with Singapore to work on jointly calling an open tender to appoint the operating company.

The RTS bilateral agreement, he said, is a binding international treaty regardless of changes to governments, and makes clear each country's responsibilities and the consequences of not meeting them.

Mr Khaw also said that Singapore will continue to take a "constructive approach" to move the project forward, and remains fully committed to implementing it.

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S'pore to review adoption law and look into surrogacy issue

Focus will be on strengthening adoption Act to better reflect public policy – which in turn reflects values of broad society

Rachel Au-Yong
Political Correspondent

Singapore is reviewing the adoption law and looking into the issue of surrogacy, following a recent landmark case involving a gay father adopting his biological child who was conceived through a surrogate in the United States.

Even so, Minister for Social and Family Development Desmond Lee stressed again the Government's position on same-sex parenthood, saying it does not support the formation of families by gay parents.

Mr Lee was responding to three MPs in Parliament yesterday, who had raised questions about last month's High Court decision to grant the gay man's appeal to adopt his son.

Some celebrated the ruling as a mark of progress for the gay community, while others pointed out that it goes against what constitutes a family. Yet others felt that the laws surrounding surrogacy were unclear, and wondered if the man had exploited a loophole to legally adopt his child.

Today, surrogacy is barred in Singapore. Parents who have gone abroad for it and returned home to apply for adoption of their surrogate children will have their applications assessed on a case-by-case basis. To date, the courts have granted the adoption of 10 children to married couples who used surrogacy because of infertility issues.

But surrogacy, Mr Lee said, "is a complex issue with ethical, social, health and legal implications for all parties involved".

Pinpointing commercial surrogacy, he noted concerns about the exploitation of women and commodification of children. These are not trivial and warrant careful study, he added.

Meanwhile, he issued this note of caution: "Persons who are considering surrogacy should take this into account from the outset while making their decision, as such factors could have a significant impact on the child."

Mr Christopher de Souza (Holland-Bukit Timah GRC), in response to the speech, urged the authorities to bar surrogacy explicitly.

While acknowledging the concerns, Mr Lee said the authorities will also "(keep) in mind the wishes, aspirations and concerns of mothers who would otherwise not be able to conceive their own flesh and blood".

In reviewing the Adoption of Children Act, the focus is on how they can be "strengthened to better reflect public policy, which is, in turn, a reflection of the values of our broad society today", Mr Lee said.

The "prevailing social norm", he noted, is still that of a man and woman marrying, and raising children in a stable family unit.

While the child's welfare is important, his ministry is looking into whether changes are needed "so that an appropriate balance can be struck when important public policy considerations are involved".

Mr Lee noted that the boy, aged five, is not stateless but is a US citizen being raised by the dad and his partner in the same home.

Dr Fatimah Lateef (Marine Parade GRC) asked Mr Lee if his ministry would be involved in keeping

an eye on the psychological and mental well-being of the boy.

Mr Lee replied: "We are concerned about the formation and mainstreaming of same-sex parent family units in Singapore, but when it comes to the welfare of the child, we have to act on the basis of whether there are concerns."

In spelling out the official position, Mr Lee reiterated that lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people have a place in Singapore society and are entitled to their own private lives.

"However, we must be mindful that a push for rights and entitlements which broader society is not ready for, or able to accept, will provoke a pushback, and can be very socially divisive."

"A push to use legislation or the courts to precipitate social change involving issues as deeply held and personal as this polarises society."

He stressed: "We do not support the formation of family units with children and homosexual parents through institutions and processes such as adoption."

With the "prevailing social norm" being that of a married man and woman bringing up children in a stable family unit, it follows that "the Government does not encourage planned and deliberate single parenthood as a lifestyle choice".

Referring to the case, Mr Lee said adoption does not guarantee benefits like citizenship. Access to housing, for instance, will be decided by prevailing criteria, in line with public policy supporting parenthood within marriage. But, he added: "All Singaporean children, regardless of their legitimacy status, will receive government benefits that support their growth and development, including healthcare and education benefits."

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NOTE OF CAUTION

Persons who are considering surrogacy should take this into account from the outset while making their decision, as such factors could have a significant impact on the child.



MINISTER FOR SOCIAL AND FAMILY DEVELOPMENT DESMOND LEE

MINDFUL OF CHILD

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MR LEE, on whether the ministry would be involved in monitoring the boy.

MATTER OF BENEFITS

All Singaporean children, regardless of their legitimacy status, will receive government benefits that support their growth and development, including healthcare and education benefits.



MR LEE, who said adoption on its own does not guarantee benefits like citizenship. Access to housing, for example, will continue to be determined by prevailing criteria.

READ MORE

Reports from Parliament. [HOME B4&5](#)



Dr Amy Khor says MOH has required healthcare institutions to strengthen their sterilisation systems.

TTSH lapse: MOH ordered immediate safety reviews at all places

Salma Khalik
Senior Health Correspondent

The Ministry of Health (MOH) instructed all public and private healthcare institutions to "conduct immediate safety reviews" after it discovered that some dental equipment which had not been sterilised fully was used at Tan Tock Seng Hospital (TTSH).

Senior Minister of State for Health Amy Khor told Parliament yesterday that MOH had also required them to strengthen their sterilisation systems and to ensure staff compliance with the required processes.

She was replying to questions from Miss Cheng Li Hui (Tampines GRC) and Mr Leon Perera (Non-Constituency MP) on action taken following the use in November of up to eight packs of dental equipment that had not been sterilised fully.

Dr Khor also explained that there were already "at least three layers of checks" in place at TTSH.

The person operating the sterilising machines was meant to check that sterilisation had been carried out.

The person unloading the equipment was meant to check the colour tab had changed colour to indicate that sterilisation was complete.

It was also the job of the person using the equipment to check that the tab was the correct colour before using the equipment.

All three steps were not adhered to at TTSH on Nov 28 last year.

Once the error was discovered, the hospital immediately recalled all the packs, but eight were missing and all could have already been used on patients.

Following the incident, the National Healthcare Group, which runs TTSH, now requires one person to perform the entire sterilisation process. All staff involved in critical steps can be tracked and traced.

MOH had also asked all healthcare institutions to heighten vigilance, step up competency training and conduct internal quality audits on their sterilisation process.

Dr Khor said that while the risk of infection was "extremely low" in the TTSH incident, "it is nonetheless a serious breach".

Disciplinary action has been taken against the 18 people involved, including warnings and financial penalties. They will also be counselled.

Dr Khor stressed that patient safety "is of utmost importance", and apologised that such an incident occurred.

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Last month, the High Court, in a landmark case, allowed a gay man, who lives with his partner, to adopt a child whom he had fathered in the United States through a surrogate mother. ST FILE PHOTO

IHiS fires two staff, slaps penalties on five senior management figures

Irene Tham
Senior Tech Correspondent

The technology agency pulled up for its lapses in last June's cyber attack on SingHealth has fired two employees and imposed "significant financial penalty" on five members of its senior management team, including its chief executive.

In a statement yesterday, the Integrated Health Information Systems (IHiS), the central IT agency responsible for Singapore's healthcare sector, said: "IHiS takes a serious view of the incident and the need for accountability."

The cyber attack resulted in the personal information of 1.5 million patients, including Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong, being stolen by hackers, and the lapses by IHiS

were highlighted by a high-level panel that probed the incident.

The disciplinary action follows the release of a 453-page public report last week by the Committee of Inquiry (COI) probing the incident.

Yesterday, IHiS said that two individuals found to be negligent during the data breach will have their services terminated.

One was a team lead in the infrastructure systems team. While he had the necessary technical competencies, his attitude towards security and his set-up of the servers introduced unnecessary and significant risks to the system. The other was a senior manager in charge of cyber security at IHiS. He held a mistaken understanding of what constituted a security incident and when a security incident should be reported.

"His passiveness even after re-

peated alerts by his staff resulted in missed opportunities which could have mitigated or averted the effect of the cyber attack," said IHiS.

A cluster information security officer will be demoted and redeployed to another role. He was found to have misunderstood what constituted a security incident and failed to comply with IHiS' incident reporting processes.

The disciplinary panel took into account mitigating factors such as his lack of aptitude, which made him unsuitable for the role.

On the financial penalty imposed on five senior management team members, IHiS said this was "for their collective leadership responsibility". The five include CEO Bruce Liang. In addition, two middle-management personnel, who were supervisors of the sacked employees, will

bear "moderate" financial penalties.

"The CEO and management team have acknowledged their responsibilities and accepted the penalties. They have committed to leading IHiS to improve our cyber-security defence and preparedness, and rebuild public trust in our healthcare system," IHiS said, adding that three employees were commended for demonstrating resourcefulness in managing the cyber attack.

Mr Paul Chan, chairman of IHiS board, said: "The cyber attack has been a reminder of our need to be ever more vigilant and prepared for new cyber threats. Patient care will continue to be our priority."

Human resource experts said financial penalties would likely come in the form of bonus reduction. Singapore Human Resources Institute president Erman Tan said: "This is so that... they see a duty to safeguard personal data."

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• Additional reporting by Hariz Baharudin

[SEE EDITORIAL A15](#)



"Significant financial penalty" was imposed on Integrated Health Information Systems chief executive Bruce Liang (left) and four other senior management team members "for their collective leadership responsibility". PHOTO: IHiS

Speaking at the WP Members' Forum 2019 on Sunday, Workers' Party chief Pritam Singh said the desired political outcome of one-third opposition in Parliament would be one that makes a government sensitive to the pulse of the people and their welfare. PHOTO: WORKERS' PARTY



WP chief wants party to aim to win a third of Parliament seats

Ng Huiwen

The Workers' Party (WP) should aim to contest and win one-third of the seats in Parliament in the medium term, said party secretary-general Pritam Singh. He set this aim on Sunday, when he also urged party members to continue building on the "sensible approach of rational and responsible politics" established by Mr Low Thia Khiang, who retired as party secretary-general in April last year after 17 years at the helm. Speaking at the WP Members' Forum 2019, Mr Singh said he believed Singapore must aspire towards a genuinely diverse Parliament with at least one-third of the elected seats in opposition hands, regardless of which party is running the country and which party or parties are in the opposition. "As a medium-term objective, the

Workers' Party should aim to contest and win one-third of the seats in Parliament," he said. The target is based on the party's past experience of attracting suitable and qualified candidates willing to stand in general elections, he said, adding that it was a high bar for a small party. The WP currently has six out of the 89 seats in the Singapore Parliament, with the ruling People's Action Party (PAP) filling the remaining 83. Mr Singh said the WP currently has only a "toehold in Parliament", given the margin of the result in Aljunied GRC, which it first won in 2011 with a 54.7 per cent vote majority and retained in 2015 with 50.95 per cent. "The risk of a wipeout with no elected opposition represented by the Workers' Party is a real one," he said. The desired political outcome of one-third opposition would be one

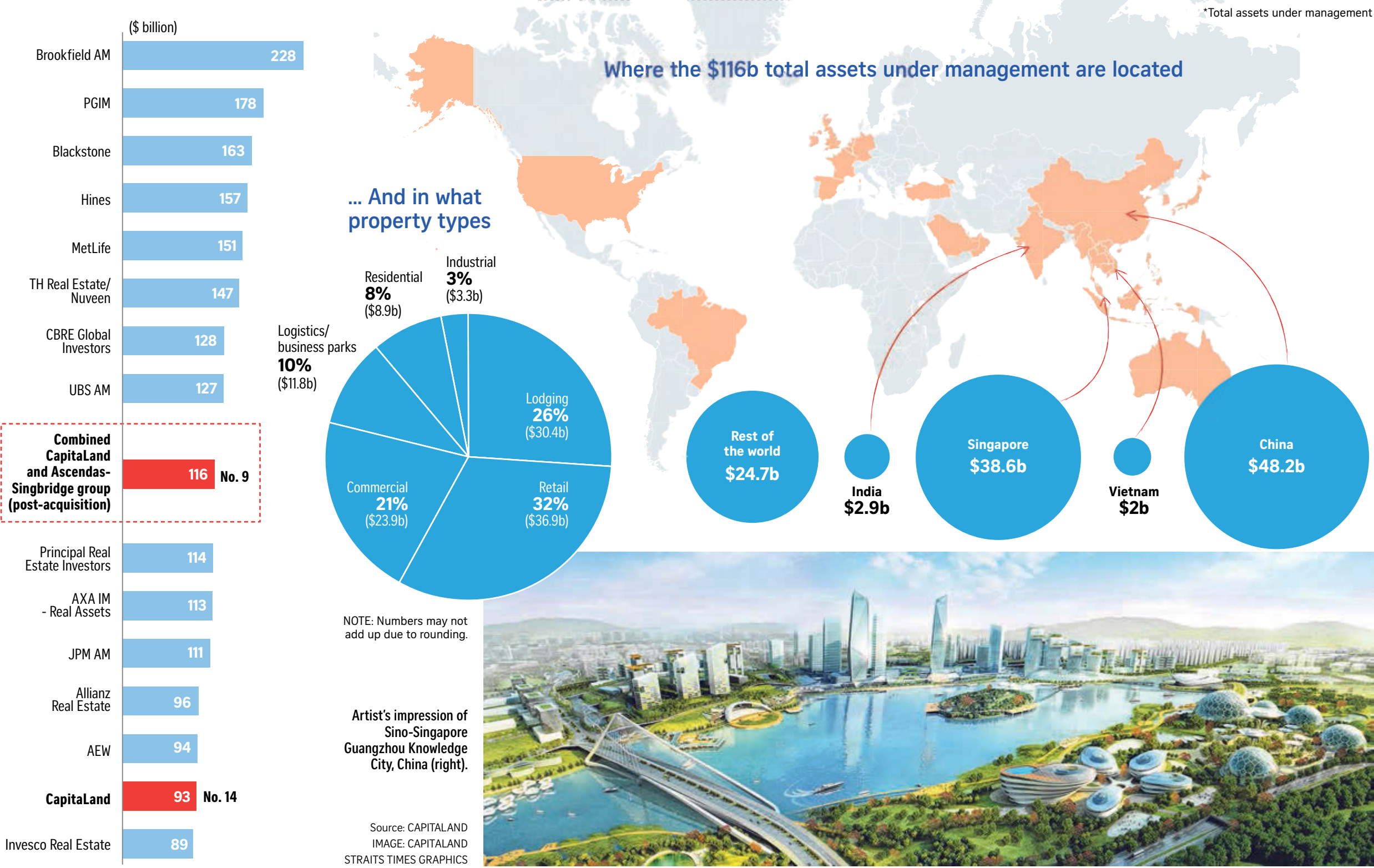
that makes a government sensitive to the pulse of the people and their welfare, he said. It should also allow any ruling party to govern without gridlock while promoting political openness "that so many of us yearn for in Singapore". This will give rise to a different type of politics that precipitates a Singapore which is caring and confident about the future, "not one that is framed by libel suit after libel suit against one's opponents, be they in politics or civil society". Mr Singh, who like Mr Low is an MP for Aljunied GRC, said the playing field between the PAP and the opposition would continue to be uneven, given the PAP's "determination to maintain its dominance through its control of grassroots organisations". "This includes its ability to make changes to the Constitution, the highest law of the land, through its near absolute control of Parlia-

ment," said Mr Singh. He also told members that the WP and other political parties are "only a tool to effect political change", and that it is the public who must decide whether they want a representative and balanced Parliament to prevent a situation of "ownself check ownself". To offer a secure alternative to Singaporeans, Mr Singh said the WP has to put the best team – and not the best individuals – forward, adding that the party must comprise members who work with others rather than march to their own drumbeat. Future party members would come from a variety of groups with different ideas on how to improve the welfare of Singaporeans. The WP's approach should be one with a sense of proportion, empathy and balance, and which takes in the context of a multiracial and multi-religious society. As an opposition party, the WP has a role to play in supporting what it means to be Singaporean, Mr Singh said. This includes racial and religious harmony, national service and the importance of an incorruptible public service, among others.

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An Asian and global giant

With the acquisition of Ascendas-Singbridge by CapitaLand, the combined group will become the ninth biggest real estate investment manager globally by AUM*.



News analysis

Proposed \$11b deal will extend CapitaLand's geographical reach

It will also acquire meaningful scale to break into key growth markets like India



Grace Leong

Business Correspondent

Singapore's blue chip property darling CapitaLand's proposed \$11 billion acquisition of Temasek

unit Ascendas-Singbridge will not only significantly increase its geographical reach but also give it meaningful scale in key growth markets like India, which it has found difficult to break into. CapitaLand group chief financial officer Andrew Lim noted yesterday that the deal will play a key role in determining what CapitaLand 3.0 will look like. "More than 80 per cent of Ascendas-Singbridge's AUM (total assets under management) is in the business space, and 50 per cent is in sectors exposed to new economy space such as business

parks and data centres. This will allow CapitaLand to capture mega trends (such as rising urbanisation and e-commerce), which will drive growth," he said. The deal will also open doors to "exciting new growth markets in India, a market we had trouble unlocking before... In India, Ascendas is the first mover, so they have great advantage. They also have a strong platform in developed markets in the US, Britain and Australia," Mr Lim said. Mr Lee Chee Koon, president and group chief executive of CapitaLand, said that strategically, the deal will add "an interesting asset class in the new economy space and (complement) CapitaLand's strengths in

The proposed deal will make the combined entity the ninth largest real estate investment manager in the world with \$116 billion AUM, positioning the group to compete on a global scale.

residential, shopping malls, lodging and offices. We can decide on how to deploy capital in which asset classes depending on the property cycle". The proposed deal will make the combined entity the ninth largest real estate investment manager in the world with \$116 billion AUM, positioning the group to compete on a global scale. Gibson Dunn & Crutcher partner Robson Lee said the deal could help to "consolidate cross-border township and mega property projects presently undertaken by Ascendas-Singbridge under CapitaLand to reap better economies of scale and to avoid duplication of manpower". "It will also enable the management of all such projects to

have access to the capital market through CapitaLand to raise public funds for all existing projects such as the Guangzhou Knowledge City. "There is potential for Temasek to expand its overseas capabilities to develop mega property projects in countries such as North Korea. This merger will enhance Singapore's ability to ride the expected wave of growth in demand for township projects in developing countries," Mr Lee said. Ms Pauline Goh, chief executive of CBRE Singapore and South-east Asia, noted: "Its significantly increased scale and now, foothold in practically every asset class, as well as presence in growth markets like India, Korea and Europe, further strengthens its position as a global real estate company. Additionally, CapitaLand will now have an even broader portfolio base to continue to roll out its best-in-class digital solutions, which will enhance customer experience and connectivity." OCBC Investment Research analyst Andy Wong has a buy call on CapitaLand, saying the deal could "significantly increase CapitaLand's scale and allow it to have a strong presence in the industrial and logistics markets. CapitaLand expects to reap synergies, given the complementary nature of Ascendas-Singbridge's business to CapitaLand's".

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WORLD

MOST NO. OF DAYS OF GOVT SHUTDOWN IN US HISTORY WITH NO DEAL IN SIGHT **A14**

No-Brexit outcome would be catastrophic, May warns

British leader says lawmakers set on blocking her deal risk dealing a blow to democracy

LONDON • Prime Minister Theresa May said yesterday that Brexit being blocked by lawmakers was now a more likely outcome than Britain leaving the EU without a deal.

The fate of Britain's planned March 29 exit from the EU is deeply uncertain as Parliament is likely to reject Mrs May's deal this evening, opening up outcomes ranging from a disorderly divorce to reversing Brexit altogether.

Mrs May used a speech at a factory in the leave-supporting city of Stoke-on-Trent in central England to try and win over Brexit-supporting lawmakers who have repeatedly said they will vote down her divorce deal. "There are some in West-

minster who would wish to delay or even stop Brexit and who will use every device available to them to do so," Mrs May said.

"While no-deal remains a serious risk, having observed the events at Westminster over the last seven days, it's now my judgment that the more likely outcome is a paralysis in Parliament that risks there being no Brexit."

Mrs May had warned lawmakers on Sunday that failing to deliver Brexit would be "catastrophic" for democracy, and her ministers said that thwarting the outcome of the 2016 referendum could lead to a rise in far-right populism.

As the world's biggest trading

bloc tried to brace itself for an unpredictable ride, Spain said the European Union could agree to extend the Brexit deadline, but not beyond elections for the European Parliament due in May.

Amid the deepest crisis in British politics for at least half a century, the British Prime Minister and EU leaders yesterday exchanged letters giving assurances on her withdrawal agreement.

The EU told Mrs May that it stood by commitments to find ways to avoid triggering the controversial "Irish backstop" in their Brexit deal and that this pledge had legal weight.

In a joint reply to questions from Mrs May, European Commission president Jean-Claude Juncker and European Council president Donald Tusk said the EU stood by its commitment to try and reach a

PARALYSIS LOOMS

While no-deal remains a serious risk, having observed the events at Westminster over the last seven days, it's now my judgment that the more likely outcome is a paralysis in Parliament that risks there being no Brexit.



BRITISH PRIME MINISTER THERESA MAY

post-Brexit trade deal by the end of next year in order to avoid using the unpopular backstop.

However, even if the target date were not met, Britain would have the option to extend a status-quo transition period to avoid triggering the backstop, which is meant to avoid a hard customs border for Northern Ireland.

"If the backstop were nevertheless to be triggered, it would only apply temporarily, unless and until it is superseded by a subsequent agreement that ensures that a hard border is avoided," they said.

Mrs May said the assurances might not go far enough for some lawmakers, and the small Northern Irish party that prop up her government said it was insufficient.

Meanwhile, Mr Gareth Johnson, a lawmaker, who helped enforce discipline in Mrs May's Conservative

Party, quit his role yesterday, citing his "own personal objection to the agreement".

Mrs May was to make a statement to Parliament later yesterday. But with her deal facing opposition from all sides in the House of Commons, the letters are unlikely to change the fundamental outcome of the vote.

With no-deal Brexit the default option if Mrs May's deal is defeated, some lawmakers are planning to pull control of Brexit from the government to senior figures in Parliament. Though Mrs May is weakened, the executive has significant powers and it was unclear how Parliament would be able to take control of Brexit.

If Mrs May's deal is defeated and the government is unable to have any amended version passed in the next three weeks, one suggestion is for senior lawmakers who chair parliamentary committees to come up with an alternative Brexit plan.

"We're in the very, very final stages of the end-game here," said Mr Nick Boles, one of the Conservative lawmakers behind the plan, who said he would vote for Mrs May's deal.

"What we need to do is find the solution, and if the government can't find the solution - and we want the government to find the solution, and we'll be voting for her solution - but if it can't then Parliament needs to," Mr Boles added. REUTERS



Pro and anti-Brexit supporters demonstrating outside the Houses of Parliament in London yesterday, as Prime Minister Theresa May warned MPs against failing to deliver Brexit. PHOTO: AGENCY FRANCE-PRESSE

News analysis

Mayday in the House



Jonathan Eyal

Global Affairs Correspondent In London

Prime Minister Theresa May has made a last-ditch appeal to British lawmakers to approve an agreement she negotiated to leave the European Union when it is put to a final vote in Parliament later today.

Not to back the deal for Brexit would amount to a "catastrophic and unforgivable breach of trust in our democracy", Mrs May warned, deploying dramatic language rarely used by British leaders.

But it is almost certain that the Brexit deal will be voted down by Parliament. The only questions are how big the defeat will be, and what the government will do to chart Britain's way out of what is arguably its biggest political crisis since the end of World War II.

The 600-page EU withdrawal agreement, concluded last November between Britain and the EU, guarantees the rights of EU citizens living in Britain and British expats living on the continent, provides for a transition period to last until the end of 2020 during which Britain will abide by all EU rules yet lose membership in European institutions, and specifies the terms of the "divorce" bill, which amounts to £39 billion (\$66 billion).

It also envisages a future cooperative relationship between Britain and the EU in trade, diplomatic and military affairs, although the precise details may take years to sort out.

Mrs May, who spent about 18 months negotiating this deal, argues that this is the best that Britain can get. But MPs of all political stripes have hated the deal from the moment it was published. Some believe that Britain is giving away too much for too little and argue that if this is the best Europe can offer, Britain should just walk out of the EU with no deal at all.

Others hate Mrs May's deal because it makes Britain's separation from Europe a reality and, instead of membership, it offers just an inferior status of a free trade partner.

And then, there are scores of MPs who detest the Brexit deal's special provisions promising Ireland the right to veto any future EU trade arrangement with Britain unless the British grant a special status to Northern Ireland, which is part of the United Kingdom. This is seen by some legislators in London as an open invitation to break up the country.

Mrs May's ability to have her EU agreement ratified by Parliament was limited from the start by the fact that her ruling Conservatives lack an overall majority.

But the opposition Labour Party is also deeply divided over the merits of the Brexit agreement. In effect, both government and opposition leaders have lost control over their MPs, and it is this which makes the



outcome of today's vote so difficult to predict, although nobody doubts that the deal will be rejected.

Expectations are so low that if Mrs May loses the vote by a majority of around 60 to 80 MPs in the 650 member-strong House of Commons, that would be considered an achievement for the beleaguered leader.

Under such circumstances, Mrs May is expected to fly to Brussels as early as tomorrow in an effort to persuade EU leaders to offer concessions which could mollify MPs to vote again. EU officials have been tight-lipped over what such concessions may be, but they could come in a form of a public letter to the British government promising that the question of Northern Ireland will not be used to prevent future arrangements, and offering speedy trade negotiations.

However, if the Brexit deal goes down by a majority of anything between 150 and 200 MPs - as some surveys by the BBC, Britain's public-funded broadcaster, seem to suggest - then it is difficult to see how any negotiated arrangement can be resurrected.

Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn plans to seize the initiative and table a motion of no-confidence in the government in the hope of forcing a new general election.

But that is unlikely to succeed, since the same rebellious Conservative MPs who are giving Mrs May such a hard time are likely to swing behind her to avoid the government's collapse.

Since nobody in Europe wants to reopen all the separation negotiations, the only option the May government then has is to either allow Britain to crash out of the EU with no deal - which will happen automatically by March 29 - or hold a referendum, asking the people if they wish to approve the deal.

The snag there is that it is not obvious that MPs would support a new referendum and, if they do, they may insist on also re-running the question put to the electorate back in 2016, namely whether Britain should leave the EU at all.

Mrs May hopes to wear her opponents down by threatening her backbenchers - most of whom support Brexit - that if they defy her, the result may well be that Britain remains locked in the EU. Yet that may embolden those in Parliament who want precisely such an outcome.

Either way, seldom has Britain been as politically rudderless as it is now. And seldom has a week in politics been as crucial as this one.

Jonathan.eyal@gmail.com

British Prime Minister Theresa May giving a speech at a factory in Stoke-on-Trent yesterday, during which she urged MPs to support her Brexit Bill in Parliament today. PHOTO: AGENCY FRANCE-PRESSE

Possible scenarios

1 THE SQUEEZE-THROUGH DEAL

Prime Minister Theresa May loses the vote today, but soldiers on, and squeezes concessions from European Union leaders such as promises to move more quickly towards a favourable trade deal, without holding Northern Ireland hostage to such talks.

Armed with these concessions, Mrs May could resubmit her Brexit deal to Parliament as early as next Monday. Her hope is that many of the rebels within her party may be satisfied with this, and return to the fold; she also hopes that the Labour opposition may choose to abstain in a second vote, thereby allowing the Brexit agreement to be ratified.

2 THE CRASH-OUT

Britain leaves with no negotiated arrangement. That is the default legal position; under existing treaties, if no deal is concluded, Britain is automatically out by March 29.

The disruption which this would entail would be huge, although nobody knows how big the damage to Europe's economy would be.

Plans are in place to prevent food and medicine shortages, and alleviate some of the other potential critical shortages. Mrs May also hopes that, as the deadline for Brexit approaches and no agreement is in sight, the very threat of a crash-out may persuade the Europeans to soften their demands on Britain.

3 THE NEVER-LEAVE

The EU extends the Brexit deadline, perhaps in return for a British government promise to hold another referendum, or a fresh general election. The remaining 27 EU member states can decide, by unanimity, to postpone the March 29 deadline in order to give everyone more time. That would give Mrs May an opportunity to consider a referendum to break the logjam by asking the people of Britain to choose whether to approve the Brexit deal.

The snag is that a new referendum will also require Parliament's approval, and MPs would not sanction this without also asking voters whether they still wish Britain to leave the EU, which is precisely the outcome the May government is desperate to avoid.

For the moment, a general election remains only a remote possibility; it would only become relevant if the British government disintegrates as a result of differences over Brexit.

Jonathan Eyal

The six movers and shakers behind Parliament's vote

The power to dictate the course of Brexit seems increasingly out of Prime Minister Theresa May's hands. Instead, control appears to be with a handful of veteran politicians who want to maintain close ties to the European Union. With Mrs May's exit deal all but certain to be defeated today, and Members of Parliament trying to take control, here is a look at who are pulling the strings.



DOMINIC GRIEVE, 62
Conservative

Mr Grieve is a former attorney-general who has already waged successful battles to secure a greater role for Parliament in the Brexit process. He is also the reason Mrs Theresa May has come back to Parliament with a Plan B just three days after her deal was thrown out.

Mr Grieve wants a second referendum and is using all his experience as a lawyer and politician to make it happen.



OLIVER LETWIN, 62
Conservative

Mr Letwin is a former minister who has already brokered deals between the government and pro-EU Conservative rebels in Parliament.

Although traditionally a May loyalist, he voted against the government this month to try to prevent a no-deal Brexit.

He has spoken in favour of a Norway-style agreement that would keep Britain inside the single market.



HILARY BENN, 65
Labour

Mr Benn is the pro-EU chair of Parliament's Brexit Committee. He served in the Cabinets of former prime ministers Tony Blair and Gordon Brown and is not an ally of Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn.

He is fighting to prevent the chaos of a no-deal departure and maintain closer ties with the EU than Mrs May's plan allows.

He has proposed what is potentially one of the most important motions of this week's debate - a wrecking amendment that calls for Mrs May's withdrawal agreement to be thrown out and for the government to reject a no-deal exit.



YVETTE COOPER, 49
Labour

Ms Cooper is another former Labour Cabinet minister who is scrutinising the Brexit details. She is also not an ally of Mr Corbyn, but an outspoken critic of the government's policy, particularly when it comes to the impact leaving the EU could have on national security.

She inflicted a bruising defeat on the government on Jan 8 with an amendment that would curtail the government's tax powers in the event of no deal.



JOHN BERCOW, 55
Speaker of The House of Commons

Mr Bercow is perhaps the most controversial Speaker in Britain in recent memory.

His relations with Mrs May's office have long been strained amid accusations of bias, but they hit a nadir last week when he made an unprecedented decision to allow an amendment proposed by Mr Grieve - to Mrs May's detriment.

Those who are trying to soften Brexit see Mr Bercow as an ally. Mr Bercow, who voted remain in the 2016 referendum, has a reputation for giving rank-and-file Members of Parliament time during key debates.

It is up to the Speaker to select amendments, giving him power to shape the vote today.



KEIR STARMER, 56
Labour

Mr Starmer, once a high-flying lawyer, is the Brexit spokesman for the opposition Labour Party. He represents one of the most remain-voting constituencies in Britain and is more pro-EU than the Labour leader.

He is credited with slowly shifting Mr Corbyn's Brexit policy to a softer position, and wants to maintain close ties with the bloc. He was instrumental in forcing the government to publish Brexit documents it wanted to keep private, and has worked with Tory colleagues to try to prevent a no-deal Brexit.

BLOOMBERG, AGENCY FRANCE-PRESSE

No-deal Brexit expected to hurt growth in Europe and beyond

Jeffrey Hutton
Regional Correspondent

The British people will see their economy set back by nearly a decade. In the European Union, the economy will shrink by 1.5 per cent over the next decade. As for global gross domestic product (GDP) growth, already beset by a

flailing Chinese economy and a protectionist US government, this will wind back to its slowest pace since 2009.

Such are the forecasts if, as expected, Britain's Parliament rejects Prime Minister Theresa May's Brexit agreement and the country crashes out of the EU with nothing but World Trade Organisation rules to govern its exports.

The forecasts, trickling in over recent months, reflect growing uncertainty among consumers and businesses as the prospect for what has been termed a no-deal Brexit looms larger as the March 29 deadline to reach a deal approaches.

That uncertainty will exacerbate volatility among emerging market currencies as investors yank investments from markets perceived as

risky and park them in US dollar-dominated assets, said Mr Harry Su, managing director and head of equity capital markets at Samuel International in Jakarta.

A higher US dollar typically dampens commodity prices, the currency in which energy, metals and crops are typically priced, hitting big emerging economies such as Indonesia and Brazil as the biggest

economies - the United States, the EU and China - struggle. "It's going to create complexities and volatility at a time when global economies are slowing," Mr Su told The Straits Times, referring to a no-deal Brexit.

Earlier this month, the World Bank said US GDP growth would slow to 2.5 per cent, the slowest pace since 2009, when it con-

tracted 1.7 per cent. China's economy will expand by 6.5 per cent, compared with 6.9 per cent last year. The EU will grow by 1.6 per cent, three percentage points slower than last year.

Last year, worries over budget deficits among emerging economies triggered a slump in their currencies, including Turkey's lira, the Philippine peso and the Indonesian

rupiah. Investors parked billions in US dollar-denominated assets just as the US Federal Reserve was hiking interest rates.

Those currencies have recovered somewhat.

The rupiah, for example, has clawed back about 8 per cent of its value since November, helped in part by the central bank's five interest rate hikes since May. But the currency is still down 6 per cent from its level 12 months ago, in part because of a current account deficit that widened to 3.4 per cent during the three months ended September.

"A no-deal Brexit is going to be bad for Indonesia," Mr Su said.

The prospect of a no-deal Brexit is already bad for Britain.

In November, the International Monetary Fund said the British economy may eventually shrink by as much as 8 per cent should the country leave the EU without a deal, giving up hard-won gains after a decade when the GDP grew an average of 1 per cent a year following years of austerity.

While exporters have benefited from a cheaper British pound and benign interest rates, investment is on the wane. Business investment slowed from 2.4 per cent a year at the end of 2017 to 1.8 per cent a year, according to the most recent

POSSIBLE CONSEQUENCES

A no-deal Brexit could mean a Europe that becomes even more consumed with its own internal affairs, increasingly disengaged from global development.



DR MARTY NATALEGAWA, Indonesia's former foreign minister.

government data.

The uncertainty has carried over to British consumer confidence, UBS said in a research report yesterday. The investment bank's research shows that consumers have been consistently pessimistic about their outlook since before the 2016 referendum when British voters opted to leave the EU, UBS strategist John Wraith wrote in the report.

But outside of the immediate economic impact of a no-deal Brexit is the dismal prospect that the EU and Britain will be disengaged from world affairs and distracted by internal struggles at a time when China and Russia are expanding

their influence, said Dr Marty Natalegawa, Indonesia's former foreign minister.

"A no-deal Brexit could mean a Europe that becomes even more consumed with its own internal affairs, increasingly disengaged from global development," he told The Straits Times.

"At a critical juncture in regional and global developments, there is already a deficit of trust leadership and governance. This cannot be a welcome state of affairs," added Mr Wraith.

Mr Wraith said that to be sure, there may eventually be a deal even if the vote fails. A badly divided Par-

liament will struggle to back any scenario, including a second referendum, or a deadline extension.

Unless the margin of defeat is massive - more than 150 votes, for example - Mrs May would be in a position to wring more concessions from the EU and secure a majority in a second vote, Mr Wraith said. "Evidence of the withdrawal agreement's unpopularity is likely to be enough to win material concessions from the EU in our view, as avoidance of a disorderly exit is very important for their economic prospects, too."

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CRIPPLING POLLUTION

Residents of several major cities worldwide are suffering from the effects of severe air pollution, putting their governments under pressure to take action against this public health hazard



Although some health-conscious residents of Bangkok have resorted to wearing face masks while outdoors, the measure has not really caught on yet in the Thai capital. Kasetsart University's associate professor of economics Witsanu Attavanich says air pollution is really a silent killer and many Thais underestimate the danger to their health. PHOTO: REUTERS

Thailand to seed clouds as smog smothers Bangkok

BANGKOK • Thailand is set to deploy rainmaking planes to seed clouds in an effort to tackle the pall of pollution that has shrouded the capital, Bangkok, in recent weeks. The technique involves dispersing chemicals into the air to aid cloud condensation, which should in theory result in rain.

"The Department of Royal Rainmaking and Agricultural Aviation... expects the rainmaking to be done (today) but it depends on wind and humidity levels," Mr Pralong Dumrongthai, the director-general of Thailand's Pollution Control Department, told reporters.

As residents woke up yesterday

yet another day of murky air blanketing their construction-busy city, environment group Greenpeace said Bangkok was now the 10th most polluted city in the world, rivalling some places in China.

Reasons for the persistent smog include combustion exhaust from traffic-strewn roads, the burning of

fields by farmers outside the city, and pollutants from factories.

Visibility has been reduced to one kilometre in some areas.

Public discontent has surfaced on Thai social media and television, with pollution-related hashtags trending and TV hosts advising viewers on the types of face masks

they should wear.

Air Visual, an independent online air quality index (AQI) monitor, pegged Bangkok at "unhealthy" levels measuring 156 AQI yesterday – though the number has often been higher in the past two months.

But the pollution department has

played down the dangers of the persistent haze, which the government judges using a different set of measurements to gauge the concentration of harmful microscopic particles known as PM2.5.

Mr Pralong said Bangkok recently experienced peak PM2.5 levels of 102 micrograms per cubic metre but the reading yesterday was under 90.

"Our PM figure is high but it is not a crisis yet," he said. "We are not in the range of 120-150 where all people have to wear masks all the time when they are out."

However, Greenpeace's Thailand director Tara Buakamsri said immediate action should be taken by the authorities, including reducing the number of cars and closing schools in high-risk areas. "The pollution issues are more and more frequent in Bangkok. We need smarter air quality management."

In recent weeks, municipal workers have sprayed water on the roads and into the air in Bangkok to help clear the smog. Also, people have been urged to stay indoors.

Kasetsart University's associate professor of economics Witsanu Attavanich said he feared state agencies and the public were underestimating the dangers of air pollution, adding that proper prevention and mitigation steps were inadequate.

The China-based air-pollution monitoring site aqicn.org reported that the PM2.5 AQI in Bangkok on Sunday reached a peak of 195, an unhealthy level, while some areas such as Bang Khen district were at hazardous levels, with PM2.5 AQI at 394 on Sunday morning.

It also forecast harmful levels of pollution in Bangkok every morning for the rest of the week because there was little wind.

Still, people wearing face masks remain a rare sight around the Thai capital. And many children and seniors can be seen going about their outdoor activities as usual.

"Air pollution is really a silent killer and many Thais underestimate the danger to their health, so not many people protect themselves by wearing a face mask or installing air purifiers at home," Prof Witsanu said.

Environmental health expert Sonthi Kotchawat has warned that PM2.5 is harmful because its very fine dust particles are small enough to pass through a person's lungs and enter the bloodstream. Long exposure can cause respiratory diseases, including lung cancer, heart disease and stroke, he said.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE, THE NATION/ASIA NEWS NETWORK

Emergency steps in force as fine dust blankets South Korea

SEOUL • Most of South Korea was shrouded in high levels of ultrafine particles yesterday, prompting the Ministry of Environment and municipalities to enforce emergency measures for the second consecutive day.

Seoul's fine dust level stood at 189 micrograms per cubic metre as of 2pm yesterday, according to national air quality monitor Air Korea.

The ultrafine dust level yesterday reached 146 micrograms in the nation's capital – nearly six times the World Health Organisation's recommended daily average of 25 micrograms. Elsewhere, the fine dust levels were also at worrying levels – 191 micrograms per cubic metre in Gyeonggi province, 174 in Sejong and Incheon, and 160 in North Chungcheong province.

The government on Sunday sent out emergency alerts to warn about the high dust levels expected yesterday. It asked pedestrians to put on masks and refrain from outdoor activities.

Emergency measures aimed at tackling the dust particles took effect in 10 cities and provinces, including Seoul, Busan, Daejeon, Sejong, Gwangju and North and South Chungcheong provinces.

When such emergency measures are in force, thermal power plants in the areas affected must re-

duce their output to 80 per cent of normal operations.

Also, certain old diesel cars registered in Seoul before 2005 are banned from the city's roads.

The government also shut down some 430 parking lots at state-run organisations in Seoul to discourage people from driving into the city. To further reduce the volume of vehicles that could add to the pollution, half of government vehicles are banned from the roads.

Yesterday was the third time that emergency measures had been taken to combat dust pollution, following instances in January and March last year.

The level of pollution started to climb last Friday. Over the weekend, the fine dust level hovered at around 89 to 107 micrograms, and the ultrafine dust level was between 63 and 73 in central Seoul, forcing people to stay indoors.

The nationwide levels of fine dust will remain high until the cold winds from the north bring down the temperature and clear the air some time today, said the Korea Meteorological Administration.

But questions remain over the effectiveness of the government's emergency measures, which focus on tackling the fine dust particles produced domestically.

South Koreans largely perceive a



South Korea's government sent out emergency alerts on Sunday to warn about the high dust levels expected yesterday. PHOTO: EPA-EFE

huge portion of the fine dust to come from industrial areas in China, though there is no scientific research that could measure how much China contributes to the air pollution in Korea.

Seoul Mayor Park Won-soon recently countered Beijing's claims that China has nothing to do with the fine dust over the Korean Peninsula, citing research that sug-

gests around 50 per cent to 60 per cent of fine dust over South Korea originates from China.

A spokesman for the Chinese Ministry of Ecology and Environment said in December that the air quality in China had improved over the years through regulatory measures, while that of Korea has worsened in the same period.

THE KOREA HERALD/ASIA NEWS NETWORK

Britain pledges legislation to combat deadly air pollution

LONDON • Britain pledged yesterday to fight air pollution and introduce new legislation this year on air quality to save lives and billions of pounds for the economy.

The government said Britain would become the first major economy to adopt air quality goals based on World Health Organisation (WHO) recommendations regarding people's exposure to particulate matter.

Environment Minister Michael Gove said in a statement: "Air pollution continues to shorten lives, harm our children and reduce (the) quality of life. We must take strong, urgent action."

The Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs said it aimed to reduce the costs of air pollution to society by £1.7 billion (\$3 billion) every year by 2020, increasing to £5.3 billion every year from 2030.

Last year, the government published plans to reduce emissions from cars and planes. In addition to cars, diesel-only trains will also be phased out by 2040.

The strategy, which also looks to tackle home, farming and industrial pollutants, commits Britain to halving the number of people who live in areas breaching WHO guidelines on pollution as poor air quality in British cities comes under scrutiny.

Last Friday, Attorney-General Geoffrey Cox gave consent for a new inquest to be opened into the death of Ella Kissi-Debrah, a nine-year-old asthma sufferer who died in 2013, after her family argued that the initial inquest ignored the role that air pollution might have played in her death.

A petition to Mr Cox by the family said there was evidence that Ella's hospital visits were linked to illegal levels on air pollution near her home in south London.

Mr Cox said the evidence meant the family could apply for a new inquest at the High Court. She would be the first person in Britain to have her death legally linked to air pollution as pressure groups bid to raise awareness of the impact poor air quality has on health.

"Thousands of lives are lost every year in the UK because the air we breathe contains dangerous particles," said Mr Simon Gillespie, chief executive of the British Heart Foundation, adding that the strategy needs to be matched with legislative action.

"We urgently need these guidelines adopted into national law, to accelerate coordinated, bold and ambitious action that will protect people's heart and circulatory health wherever they live in the UK," he added. REUTERS

The video clip shows Johor Menteri Besar Osman Sopian trying to get into the Proton Saga as an officer helps Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad with his seat belt. PHOTO: STAR TV



Clip of Johor MB being stopped from riding with sultan, Mahathir goes viral

JOHOR BARU • A video clip showing Johor Menteri Besar Osman Sopian being stopped from getting into a Proton Saga car has gone viral on social media.

The car was being driven by Johor ruler Sultan Ibrahim Sultan Iskandar to take Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad to the airport last week.

In the 31-second clip, Sultan Ibrahim and Tun Dr Mahathir are seen in the driver and front passen-

ger seat respectively, while Datuk Osman is seen trying to open the left passenger door at the back.

However, he is stopped by a man wearing a military uniform, believed to be Sultan Ibrahim's military aide de camp. Mr Osman is then seen uttering a few words to the two leaders.

The incident happened after Dr Mahathir had an audience with Sultan Ibrahim at Istana Bukit Serene last Thursday.

The meeting lasted 1½ hours.

Sultan Ibrahim then drove Dr Mahathir back to Senai International Airport in a first-generation Proton Saga, which the Prime Minister had gifted to the ruler's father, way back in 1985.

The video, which was uploaded by Ops Johor on its Facebook page, garnered 599 comments, 935 shares and 185,000 views on social media as of noon last Saturday. THE STAR/ASIA NEWS NETWORK

Beijing to clamp down on polluting trucks, coal burning

Mayor outlines steps to beautify Chinese capital, with more parks and green spaces

Danson Cheong
China Correspondent
In Beijing

Beijing is ramping up efforts to make the city greener by taking

diesel trucks off the roads, building more parks and clamping down harder on coal burning.

Mayor Chen Jining outlined these measures for a "beautiful Beijing" yesterday when he presented the city government's work report for

this year at the annual Beijing Municipal People's Congress. He also set lower targets for energy and water consumption and carbon dioxide emissions for this year.

The environment was a key part of Mr Chen's 90-minute speech to more than 700 delegates at the Beijing Conference Centre.

Before he was appointed as the city's mayor in 2017, Mr Chen was China's environment minister.

He said the municipal government "resolved to win the battles against air, water and soil pollution" and build a "world-class metropolis that is harmonious and liveable".

Mr Chen's remarks came two days after the nation's weather bureau issued orange smog alerts – the second-highest level – across seven regions in the north-east, which included Beijing.

This year, management and con-

trol of diesel trucks will be something the municipal government would "prioritise", the mayor said, noting that the Beijing government had already taken 47,000 heavy-polluting diesel trucks off the road.

"We will encourage the phasing out of high-emission obsolete or worn-out diesel trucks and support the development of new energy trucks," he said.

Mr Chen also said Beijing would curb coal burning, assembling enforcement teams at the municipal and district levels to do so.

The city would also add 16,667ha of parks and green spaces.

It has made progress in tackling air pollution. Last year, the level of PM2.5 particulates – pollutants small enough to enter the bloodstream – dropped to 51 micrograms per cubic metre, down from 58 the year before, said Mr Chen.

Mr Ma Jun, director of the Institute of Public and Environmental Affairs, a non-profit environmental research organisation, said a more coordinated approach to tackling pollution in the Beijing-Hebei-Tianjin region is needed.

"The situation now is actually quite good, but once there are unfavourable weather conditions in the region, heavy smog from the region will quickly concentrate in Beijing," said Mr Ma.

Mr Chen also said that the city's gross domestic product rose by 6.6 per cent last year, although he forecast that this would dip to 6 to 6.5 per cent this year.

There is a need for the Chinese capital to support private enterprises, attract global talent and encourage innovation, he added.

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A surreal scene in Yangzhou



This aerial view shows the tops of high-rise buildings poking out from heavy fog in Yangzhou, in China's eastern Jiangsu province.

The authorities in the city issued a red alert – the highest level – for heavy fog yesterday, with visibility reduced to 50m.

Sections of several highways in Yangzhou have been closed temporarily and are being monitored for safety reasons, the authorities said, adding that drivers should turn on fog lights and reduce their travelling speed.

The provincial weather bureau also issued fog alerts for other cities, including Nanjing, Taizhou, Nantong, Xuzhou and Lianyungang.

PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Indonesia charging ahead with electric vehicle ambitions

Wahyudi Soeriaatmadja
Indonesia Correspondent
In Jakarta

Indonesia has decided to open up the country to investment for the manufacture of electric vehicles, and at least two major carmakers are said to have shown interest.

Officials from Hyundai are to arrive at the end of this month to discuss plans for a green vehicle project, and Industry Minister Airlangga Hartarto yesterday said Volkswagen was also keen.

Mr Airlangga was speaking to reporters after a ministerial meeting chaired by President Joko Widodo decided fiscal incentives should be given to encourage the sales of electric cars and to develop a domestic industry for such vehicles.

"It's an open regime. The President has agreed," said Mr Airlangga. Both fully electric vehicles, also called battery electric vehicles, and hybrid electric vehicles – that do not require charging stations as they are powered by a conventional internal combustion engine – would be eligible.

"Next, the Finance Minister will hold consultations with Parliament and then we are ready to go," Mr Airlangga said.

Earlier, a source told The Straits Times that a debate was raging among ministers on whether Indonesia should adopt the fully elec-

tric vehicle regime from the outset, or start first with the hybrid one.

Maritime Affairs Coordinating Minister Luhut Pandjaitan told a media briefing yesterday, before the ministerial meeting, that Indonesia planned to start with electric motorcycles – possibly as early as this year. The scheme would then be expanded to public buses before private cars were included. He did not give a time frame.

Indonesia, which is South-east Asia's largest economy, registers annual car sales of about one million units, and Mr Airlangga said the aim was to have electric vehicles form at least 20 per cent of total domestic vehicle sales by 2025.

BRIGHT SPARK

The construction will take 16 months. By the middle of next year, we will have a plant that can supply the main raw materials to make lithium batteries.



MR LUHUT PANDJAITAN, Maritime Affairs Coordinating Minister, on a \$948 million joint venture to develop a nickel-cobalt project in Indonesia.

He said this would translate to about 400,000 cars and two million motorcycles.

The government has thrown its weight behind green vehicles in an effort to reduce the country's reliance on imports of fossil fuels and turn, instead, to tapping its abundant nickel reserves, a key material for making lithium-ion batteries.

Last week, Mr Luhut witnessed the ground-breaking of a US\$700 million (S\$948 million) joint venture to develop a nickel-cobalt project in Indonesia.

The partners include Indonesia's Morowali Industrial Park, the Chinese battery recycling company GEM, and Japan's Hanwa, which trades in steel, metals and alloys.

"The construction will take 16 months. By the middle of next year, we will have a plant that can supply the main raw materials to make lithium batteries," Mr Luhut said.

Tesla, the American carmaker which has sold about 143,000 electric cars, relies predominantly on nickel in the form of nickel sulphide as the important cathode component in its car batteries.

Nickel makes up 80 per cent of Tesla's Model S car battery components. Cobalt makes up 15 per cent and aluminium the rest.

Hyundai Motor is keen on expanding its electric car production base to Indonesia as it wants to take advantage of the recently built integrated industrial estate in Morowali, in nickel-rich Central Sulawesi province, said Mr Luhut.

"Hyundai is very eager and sees Indonesia as a good place for one of their production bases," he said. Referring to the strategic Indonesia-Australia Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement, he said Indonesia's southern neighbour could be an export market.

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Ng Kong Beng Public Lecture Series
黄光明公开讲座



Mathematics in the Solar System



Speaker: Professor William A. Casselman

Professor Casselman is Professor Emeritus in mathematics at the University of British Columbia. He has taught courses in programming and computer graphics, and was graphics editor of the Notices of the American Mathematical Society for the years 2001–2016. He obtained his PhD from Princeton University in 1966, where his advisor was Goro Shimura. Professor Casselman's mathematical research focuses on representation theory, automorphic forms, geometric combinatorics, and the structure of algebraic groups. He was named to the inaugural class of Fellows of the American Mathematical Society in 2013.

I shall first recall some of the history of the theories of the solar system. Next I shall introduce the HORIZONS project of the American National Aeronautics and Space Administration, which allows you to plot the motion of thousands of objects in space, and then discuss ways to apply mathematics in order to interpret what it gives you. Possible applications include understanding Kepler's derivation of the orbit of Mars, the motion of the moon, slingshot orbits, and potential chaos.

Date:
Thursday, 17 January 2019

Time:
6:30pm - 7:30pm

Venue:
LT 31, Block S16, Level 3
National University of Singapore
6 Science Drive 2, Singapore 117546

Admission is free.
Register at bit.ly/2Flun08



Canadian sentenced to death in China for drug smuggling

BEIJING • China's diplomatic clash with Canada escalated yesterday, when a Canadian man was sentenced to death for drug smuggling after a court overrode his plea of innocence at a retrial.

The court in north-eastern China announced the death penalty for Robert Lloyd Schellenberg after a retrial that lasted one day, and gave no indication that his sentence might be reduced to a prison term.

Schellenberg's fate is likely to become a volatile factor in diplomacy between Beijing and Ottawa after the Canadian authorities arrested a Chinese tech executive last month.

A terse official statement from the Dalian Intermediate People's Court said it had "convicted Schellenberg of smuggling drugs and sentenced him to death".

Last month, a court ordered Schellenberg to be retried after he appealed against a 15-year term for smuggling methamphetamines.

But against a backdrop of sharply increased tensions between China and Canada, the court sided with prosecutors who called for a stiffer sentence at a new trial.

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau yesterday accused China of arbitrarily using the death

penalty in this case. "It is of extreme concern to us as a government, as it should be to all our international friends and allies, that China has chosen to begin to arbitrarily apply (the) death penalty... as in this case," he told reporters.

Schellenberg's aunt Lauri Nelson-Jones said via telephone in Maryland: "The worst-case scenario is what happened, our worst fears were realised." She said she was trying to contact his immediate family to find out if they knew about the court judgment.

Prosecutors and Schellenberg yesterday offered starkly different

accounts of his role in the smuggling operation.

The prosecutors told the court that they "now have evidence that highly suggests Schellenberg was involved in organised international drug crime", China's central television broadcaster said in a report. "Schellenberg argued that he was a tourist visiting China and framed by criminals."

Schellenberg's unusually swift appeal hearing and retrial came after the Chinese government was incensed by the December arrest in Vancouver, British Columbia, of Meng Wanzhou, the chief financial

officer of Chinese telecommunications manufacturer Huawei.

Before the retrial, Schellenberg's family had voiced fears that he would become a bargaining chip for Beijing to seek Meng's release, Ms Nelson-Jones said.

"He's become a pawn," she said. "We can only guess, but that is definitely what it looks like."

Schellenberg appears to be the first North American sentenced to death in China in recent times.

The sentence must still be examined and ratified by China's highest court, the Supreme People's Court. As well imposing the death sen-

tence on Schellenberg, the Chinese authorities arrested two Canadians last month: Michael Kovrig, a former diplomat; and Michael Spavor, a businessman.

Those men have been accused of "endangering national security", a sweeping charge that can include espionage. The police have not announced any specific allegations against them while they remain in secret detention, denied visits from lawyers and family members.

The International Crisis Group, which gives advice on solving conflicts, has adamantly denied that Kovrig did anything to harm China.

Some foreign experts have said China's swift action in all three cases appeared intended to pressure Canada to free Meng and return her to China.

NEW YORK TIMES, REUTERS

Indonesia recovers Lion Air jet's cockpit voice recorder

Discovery could help shed light on why the new plane crashed, killing all 189 on board

JAKARTA • The cockpit voice recorder from a Lion Air jet that crashed last October has been recovered, officials said yesterday, a discovery that could be critical to explaining why a brand-new plane fell out of the sky just after take-off.

The Boeing 737 Max vanished from radar about 13 minutes after departing Jakarta, slamming into the Java Sea, killing all 189 people on board. Moments earlier, the pilots had asked to return to Soekarno-Hatta Airport.

The bright orange voice recorder was discovered early yesterday about 10m from a flight data recorder that was located in November, the authorities said.

"It's broken into two pieces so hopefully it's still useful" to investigators, Mr Haryo Satmiko, deputy head of Indonesia's National Transportation Safety Committee, told Agence France-Presse (AFP).

More human remains were also

found near the voice recorder, he added, without giving details.

"This will really help the investigation... and could give some more answers on the cause" of the crash, said Jakarta-based aviation analyst Dudi Sudibyo.

The airliner's flight data recorder supplied information about its speed, altitude and direction before it plunged into the sea on Oct 29.

"But (the data recorder) does not show how the flight crew's decisions were made or discussed in those final moments," Leeds University aviation expert Stephen Wright told AFP.

A preliminary crash report from Indonesia's transport safety agency suggested that the pilots of Lion Air Flight 610 struggled to control the plane's anti-stall system just before the accident.

The agency also found that the Lion Air jet should have been grounded over a recurrent techni-



Indonesian navy personnel showing the cockpit voice recorder to the media after the device was recovered at sea off the coast of Karawang, West Java, yesterday. The Lion Air Boeing 737 Max vanished from radar about 13 minutes after departing Jakarta on Oct 29, crashing into the Java Sea. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

cal problem and criticised the budget carrier's poor safety culture. But it did not pinpoint a definitive cause of the crash.

The authorities called off the grim task of identifying victims of the crash in November, with only 125 people named after tests on human remains that filled some 200 body bags.

"We're thankful and grateful that they have found the CVR (cockpit voice recorder), but it's not

enough," said parent Evi Samsul Komar, whose son and nephew were on the flight.

"There are still many passengers unaccounted for."

Nearly 30 relatives of the Lion Air crash victims are suing Boeing, alleging that faults in the plane led to the deaths.

The Max variant of the 737 is one of the world's newest and most advanced commercial passenger jets.

After investigators said the

doomed aircraft had problems with its airspeed indicator and angle of attack (AOA) sensors, Boeing issued a special bulletin telling operators what to do when they face the same situation.

An AOA sensor provides data about the angle at which air passes over the wings and tells pilots how much lift a plane is getting. The information can be critical in preventing an aircraft from stalling.

The Lion Air 737's flight data

recorder showed pilots had repeatedly tried to correct its nose from pointing down, possibly after erroneous data from AOA sensors was fed into a system that automatically adjusts some of its movements.

The preliminary crash report stopped short of making any recommendations to Boeing, but the American aviation giant has come under fire for possible glitches on the 737 Max, which entered service in 2017. AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE



Above: This picture, released by the China National Space Administration on Jan 11, shows a 360-degree panoramic image made by the Chang'e-4 lunar probe, which made the first-ever soft landing on the far side of the moon. Below: A 360-degree view from the lunar rover Yutu-2 or Jade Rabbit 2 of the site, taken by Chang'e-4. PHOTOS: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

China's next moon mission by year-end

Tan Dawn Wei
China Bureau Chief
In Beijing

Buoyed by the success of its latest lunar probe, China is set to launch another mission to the moon at the end of this year to collect samples on the side closer to Earth and bring them home.

It also has plans to send a probe to Mars in 2020, following an unsuccessful attempt in 2011, as well as further lunar explorations, and will even contribute to co-building a research station on the moon with other nations, the country's space agency said yesterday.

The Chang'e 4 probe, named after the mythical moon goddess, made history when it landed on the unexplored far side of the moon on Jan 3 in a technical and risky manoeuvre.

Since then, the Chang'e 4 has gone to work, with its rover Jade Rabbit 2 rolling around on the lunar surface and sending home the first pictures of an unseen side of the moon. It is conducting topography

surveys, temperature and mineral make-up of the moon's "dark side" and measuring cosmic radiation, the chief designer of China's lunar exploration programme, Mr Wu Weiren, told reporters yesterday.

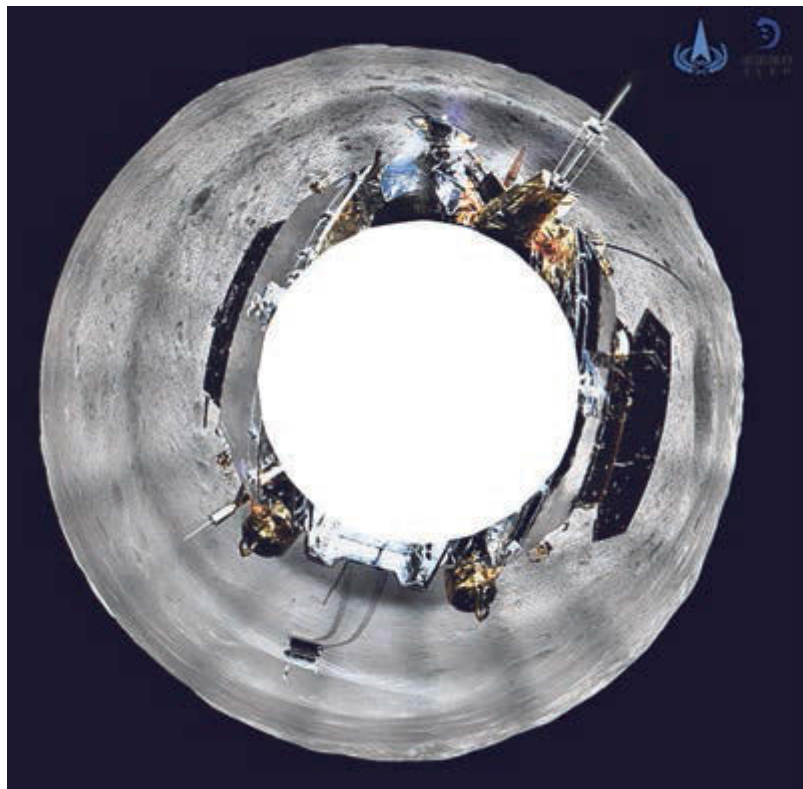
The probe carried 13 scientific payloads, including four in collaboration with Germany, Sweden, the Netherlands and Saudi Arabia.

China National Space Administration deputy head Wu Yanhua said the agency planned to send up Chang'e 5 around the end of the year and subsequently Chang'e 6, 7 and 8. No timeline was given.

The mission for Chang'e 6 will be to collect samples on the South Pole of the moon. Chang'e 7 will conduct a "comprehensive exploration of the Moon's Antarctic, including a comprehensive exploration mission on the topography, material composition and space environment of the moon", he added.

Chang'e 8 will test some "key technologies" on the moon, such as whether structures could be built using lunar soil and 3D printing.

"China, the US, Russia and coun-



tries from Europe are all studying whether to set up a research base or station on the moon," said Mr Wu Yanhua. "We are going to test some technologies via Chang'e 8 and do preliminary exploration for a joint moon research base in the future."

China's first space station was expected to be operational by 2022. He said China hoped for international collaboration on its construc-

tion and welcomed other nations to use it for scientific purposes.

Yesterday, he also said the space agency had exchanged information on Chang'e 4's mission with Nasa, its US counterpart, in what is believed to be a first since US lawmakers banned joint space activity with China on fears of cyber-spying.

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WorldBriefs

Compensation for Sewol survivors

SEOUL • A South Korean court yesterday awarded compensation to some survivors of the Sewol ferry sinking, almost five years after the accident killed more than 300 people in one of the country's deadliest maritime disasters.

The court ordered the government and the ship's operator Cheonghaejin Marine to pay each survivor 80 million won (\$97,000), while relatives received sums ranging from two million to 32 million won. The same court had previously awarded compensation to the families of the dead. AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

15 die in Iran military plane crash

DUBAI • A Boeing 707 military cargo plane crashed in bad weather yesterday, west of the Iranian capital, killing 15 out of the 16 people on board, the Iranian army said.

A flight engineer survived and was taken to hospital, the army said in a statement carried by the semi-official Fars news agency. The plane went down near Fath airport, which belongs to Iran's elite Revolutionary Guards Corps and is located near Karaj in the central Iranian province of Alborz. REUTERS

Strike action at German airports

FRANKFURT • Eight German airports, including hubs in Frankfurt and Munich, are preparing for a wave of flight cancellations today because of a strike by security staff.

Airport security workers in Frankfurt, Munich, Hamburg, Hanover, Bremen, Dresden, Leipzig/Halle and Erfurt plan to walk out from 2am to 8pm (9am today to 3am Wednesday, Singapore time) as the Ver.di union pushes for higher wages.

Lufthansa said it will cancel at least 414 flights today, including 386 flights within Europe and 28 intercontinental services. BLOOMBERG

Macron starts debate to soothe yellow-vest anger

French leader seeks to transform national unrest into solutions but makes clear he is not quitting

PARIS • President Emmanuel Macron faced a battle yesterday to convince the sceptical French of his latest move to quell “yellow vest” anger as he kick-started a two-month national debate on his policies.

Mr Macron, who is struggling to end the biggest crisis of his presidency, on Sunday set out 35 questions to be debated in towns and villages across the country between Jan 15 and March 15.

“We won’t agree on everything, that’s normal, that’s democracy. But at least we’ll show we’re a people that is not afraid to talk, exchange and debate,” he wrote in his “Letter to the French”.

The missive followed a ninth consecutive Saturday of nationwide “yellow vest” rallies which saw an uptick in turnout but less violence than previous demonstrations over the past two months.

Mr Macron hopes that returning to more participative democracy – a key feature of his 2017 grassroots election campaign – will satisfy the protesters’ demands for a greater say in the running of the country.

“I intend to transform anger into solutions,” he wrote, promising “a new contract for the nation”.

But he made clear there was no question of him resigning, saying the debates, which will revolve around taxation, democracy, the environment and immigration, were “neither an election nor a referendum”.

Within the ranks of the “yellow vests”, reactions were mixed, with some welcoming Mr Macron’s letter but many calling it a government smokescreen.

“A debate means discussing every-

thing. When you say we’re going to debate, but not about that, that, that and that... that’s called ‘shut up and listen to me’,” Mr Maxime Nicolle, one of the movement’s most prominent figures, said on YouTube.

We won’t agree on everything, that’s normal, that’s democracy. But at least we’ll show we’re a people that is not afraid to talk, exchange and debate.



FRENCH PRESIDENT EMMANUEL MACRON

In its editorial yesterday, the left-wing Liberation daily called the missive an attempt by Mr Macron “to save the three years he has left” as President. “The exercise is all the more perilous given the mood in the country, which is extremely grumpy,” the paper added.

In an Odoxa-Dentsu poll published last week, 32 per cent of respondents said they would take part in the debate but 70 per cent said they did not believe it would lead to significant change.

The questions that will be debated include: “Which taxes do you think should be lowered first?”, “Should some public services that are out of date or too expensive be eliminated?”, “What concrete proposals do you think would accel-

ate our environmental transition?” and “Should we use more referendums?”

A question about immigration asked: “Once our asylum obligations are fulfilled, do you want Parliament to be able to set annual targets?”

While Mr Macron assured that there were “no forbidden questions”, he did say that there was no question of bringing back the death penalty, banning abortion or ending the right to seek asylum.

He also said the government would not revisit steps taken “to encourage investment and make work pay more” – seen as a slapdown of the “yellow vests” demand for him to reinstate the fortune tax he partly repealed last year for high earners.

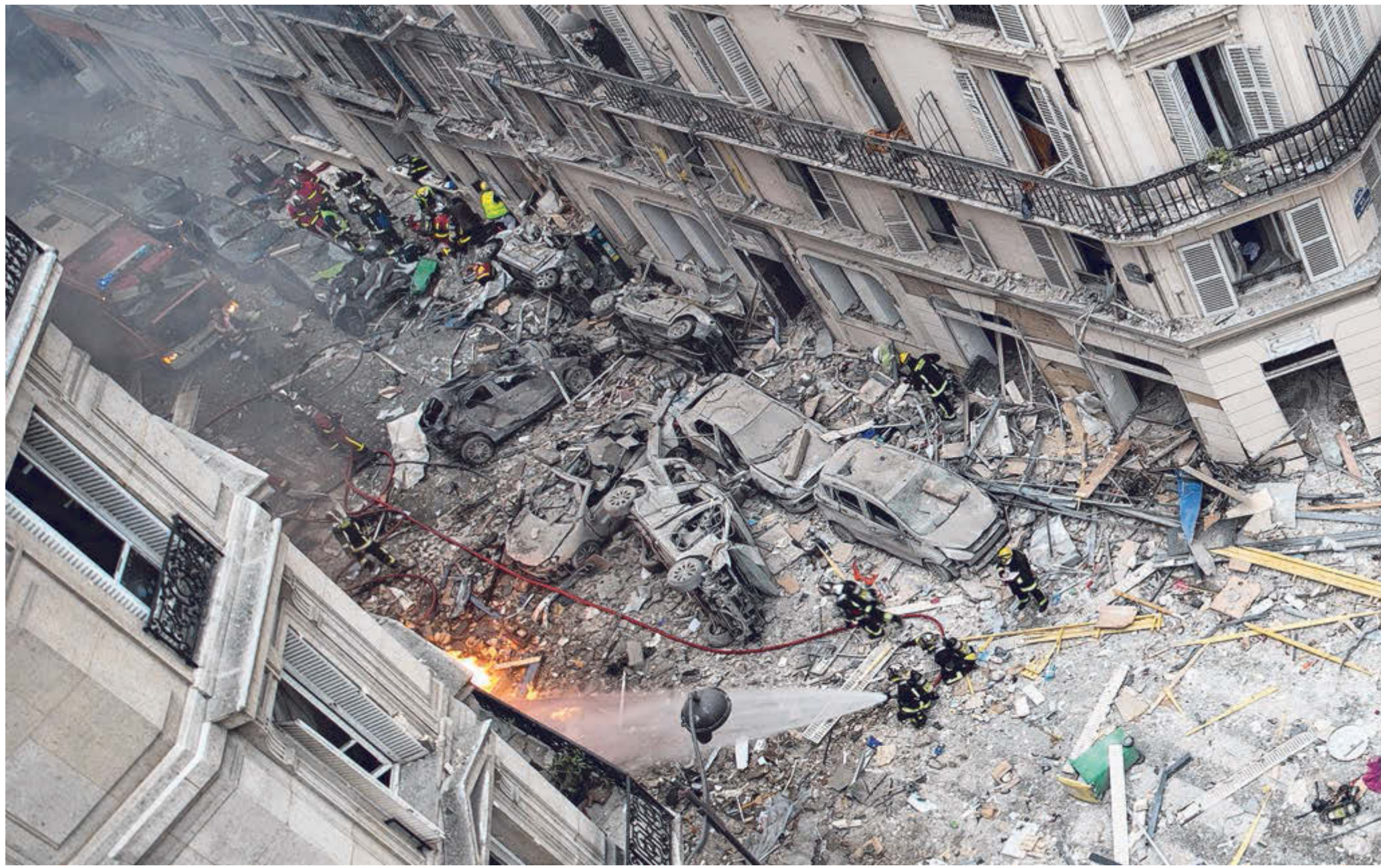
The hard-left France Unbowed party, which has been vying with the far-right National Rally to be seen as chief champion of the “yellow vests” cause, accused him of predetermining the outcome.

“The people may debate, but Jupiter decides,” Mr Eric Coquerel, a France Unbowed MP tweeted, referring to Mr Macron mockingly by his nickname, the king of the gods in Roman times.

Mr Macron has promised to report back on the consultation a month after the debates wind up.

Today, he will embark on a tour of town hall meetings around the country, the first of which will be held with local mayors in Bourghtheroulde in north-west France.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE



The powerful gas explosion in central Paris last Saturday gutted the lower part of the building, which housed a bakery and a restaurant. About 50 people were injured, nine of them seriously, including several tourists who were in the area to visit local attractions. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Death toll from Paris gas explosion rises to four

PARIS • The death toll from a powerful gas explosion in central Paris has risen to four after rescue workers found a woman’s body in the rubble, investigators said. Two firefighters and a Spanish tourist were also killed in last Saturday morning’s blast that injured dozens and badly damaged nearby apartments.

Rescue workers with sniffer dogs had earlier searched for a missing woman, who lived above the explosion site and who was believed to be in the rubble.

A source close to the investigation said the body could be that of

the missing woman.

The blast gutted the lower part of the building, which housed a bakery and a restaurant, and also overturned cars, leaving glass and rubble strewn across large swathes of the street.

About 50 people were injured, nine of them seriously, including several foreign tourists who were in the area to visit local attractions such as the Musee Grevin wax museum and the popular Rue des Martyrs.

A fire service spokesman said 40 firefighters were clearing the debris by hand on Sunday due to the

dangerous conditions. “We will leave only when everything is cleared, to be certain there is no one else,” he said, indicating that such an operation could last for about a week.

Given the extent of the damage, about 50 people were put up in temporary accommodation.

In a city that has been shaken by a string of terror attacks in recent years, the huge blast jangled nerves.

“I was in bed when it happened. I heard a muffled boom, it moved the building,” said resident Sylvie, who lives close to Rue de Treviso where

the explosion occurred. “I heard the sirens and burst into tears.”

Others, such as Mr Philippe Benoit, were out trying to repair some of the damage. He was attaching wooden panels to the front of his tourism business located on the same street. “When I arrived this morning, I found two windows blown off and glass shards everywhere. The explosion from 200m away caused all that,” he said.

Local resident Soufiane, 28, was one of many people who came to lay flowers at the site. His bouquet had a note saying “For Laura”, the

Spanish tourist who died. “As soon as I heard the noise, I went out to see what was happening. I heard this Spanish woman calling for help,” he said.

Her head was covered in blood and she was taken to a nearby hotel where two doctors, still in their pyjamas, tried to help her, he said. “When the ambulance took her away, she was still alive.”

The blast was believed to be accidental, but Paris prosecutor Remy Heitz remained cautious. “At this stage, we do not exclude any hypothesis,” he said. AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

DNA pioneer stripped of honours over racist views



Dr James Watson says he stands by his view that people of African descent tend to have lower intelligence.

WASHINGTON • Nobel laureate James Watson, who helped to discover the DNA helix and has been called the father of the Human Genome Project, was stripped of honours by his laboratory after his “reprehensible” remarks on race and ethnicity.

The Cold Spring Harbour Laboratory (CSHL) – the New York facility where Dr Watson worked for nearly four decades and where a school has been named after him – said it was acting in response to his remarks in a TV documentary that aired earlier this month.

The 90-year-old geneticist came under fire from his lab in 2007 and resigned after a British newspaper reported him saying that people of African descent tend to have lower intelligence.

In the new PBS documentary called American Masters: Decoding Watson, when asked about his views on race in the decade since his departure from the lab, Dr Watson said he stood by his earlier remarks, and cited the difference in IQ test results to suggest black inferiority.

While the DNA pioneer also expressed his hope for everyone to be equal, he added that “people who have to deal with black employees found this is not true”.

The lab, in a statement last Friday, said: “Dr Watson’s statements are reprehensible, unsupported by science, and in no way represent the views of CSHL, its trustees, faculty, staff, or students. The laboratory condemns the misuse of science to justify prejudice.” Soon after, it revoked Dr Watson’s three titles – chancellor emeritus, Oliver R. Grace Professor Emeritus, and honorary trustee. XINHUA

SEE OPINION A17

Afghan talent show singer finds fame as ‘Trudeau’s lost twin’

KABUL • An Afghan talent show contestant’s striking resemblance to Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has turned him into an unlikely celebrity in the war-torn country – and potentially given him the winning edge.

Mr Abdul Salam Maftoon, 29, a wedding singer from a village in the remote and impoverished north-eastern province of Badakhshan, had never even heard of his more famous doppelganger until a judge on the popular television music contest Afghan Star pointed out the uncanny likeness.

Slightly built with a long face and dark brown hair and eyes, Mr

Maftoon hopes the comparison to Mr Trudeau, widely seen as one of the world’s sexiest leaders, will bring him more votes on Afghanistan’s version of American Idol.

“People have forgotten my name and now they just call me ‘Justin Trudeau,’” Mr Maftoon told Agence France-Presse, his self-conscious smile revealing two gold-plated front teeth.

“I didn’t know anything about Justin Trudeau until I saw the photos on social media. The resemblance has boosted my chances of winning the competition by 50 per cent.”

Composite photos of the pair – Mr Maftoon wearing a hat favoured

by men in northern Afghanistan and Mr Trudeau in Western-style clothing – have drawn scores of comments on Facebook.

And a video of an Afghan Star panel discussion about their physical similarities has been viewed tens of thousands of times. “Trudeau’s lost twin,” wrote Neila Abdulzadah on Facebook.

Fowzia Zereh posted: “I think their story is like a Bollywood movie – they were separated at birth and he found his lost twin brother.” Another said: “This is truly the copy of Trudeau. I’d love to see our Trudeau win this year’s Afghan Star.”



Composite photos of Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and Afghan wedding singer Abdul Salam Maftoon have drawn scores of comments on Facebook. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Mr Maftoon has a good chance. The performer is among eight contestants to make it through to the next elimination round on Thursday.

The final will be held on March 21, the Persian new year’s eve.

So far, Mr Maftoon’s repertoire of romantic folk songs, which he sings in both of Afghanistan’s official languages Dari and Pashto, and his looks have impressed viewers, whose votes decide which performer is kicked off the show each week.

He has also caught the attention of the official judges. “He looks like my prime minister,” said Afghan-

born Canadian musician Qais Ulfat, one of the four judges who first pointed out Mr Maftoon’s resemblance to Mr Trudeau. “His voice is very satisfying. He has that god-gifted vocal ability. This guy could be the next Justin Bieber.”

Until now, Mr Maftoon has relied on singing and playing instruments at wedding and birthday parties to support his wife and four children.

But he is confident that his newfound fame will boost demand for his entertainment services.

“When I go back to my hometown, people will definitely call me,” Mr Maftoon said.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

News analysis

Trump faces ‘non-stop political war’ for survival

Democrats intent on holding US President accountable for scandals that have erupted

WASHINGTON • So it has come to this: The President of the United States was asked over the weekend whether he is a Russian agent. And he refused to directly answer.

The question, which came from a friendly interviewer, not one of the “fake media” journalists he disparages, was “the most insulting thing I’ve ever been asked”, he declared.

But it is a question that has hung over his presidency now for two years.

If the now 24-day, government shutdown stand-off between Mr Trump and Congress has seemed ugly, it may eventually seem tame by comparison with what is to come.

The border wall fight is just the preliminary skirmish in this new era of divided government. The real battle has yet to begin.

With Democrats now in charge of the House, the special counsel believed to be wrapping up his investigation, news media outlets competing for scoops and the first articles of impeachment already filed, Mr Trump faces the prospect of an all-out political war for survival that may make the still-unresolved, partial government shutdown pale by comparison.

The past few days have offered plenty of foreshadowing.

The newly empowered Democrats summoned the

President’s long-time personal lawyer to testify after he implicated Mr Trump in an illegal scheme to arrange hush payments before the 2016 election for women who claimed to have had affairs with him.

Legal papers disclosed that Mr Trump’s one-time campaign chairman shared polling data with an associate tied by prosecutors to Russian intelligence.

New reports over the weekend added to the sense of siege at the White House.

The New York Times reported that after Mr Trump fired Federal Bureau of Investigation director James Comey in 2017, the bureau opened an investigation into whether the President was working for the Russians.

And The Washington Post reported that Mr Trump has gone out of his way as president to hide the details of his discussions with



US President Donald Trump’s inner circle has shrunk and he has fewer advisers around him whom he trusts. PHOTO: REUTERS

President Vladimir Putin of Russia even from members of his own administration.

What all this adds up to remains unclear. Whether it will lead to a

full-blown impeachment inquiry in the House has yet to be decided.

But it underscores the chance that with candidates already lining up to take him on in 2020, Washington will spend the months to come debating the future of Mr Trump’s presidency and the direction of the country.

“The reality,” said Mr Andy Surabian, a Republican strategist and former special assistant to Mr Trump, is “that the next two years are going to be non-stop political war”.

The White House has begun recruiting soldiers. The new White House counsel Pat Cipollone has hired 17 new lawyers, according to The Post, as he prepares for a barrage of subpoenas from House Democratic committee chairmen.

But Mr Trump’s inner circle has shrunk, and he has fewer advisers around him whom he trusts.

His White House Chief of Staff is still serving in an acting capacity, and the West Wing is depleted by the shutdown.

As he himself wrote on Twitter over the weekend: “There’s almost nobody in the W.H. but me.”

Mr Surabian said the rest of the party must recognise the threat and rally behind the President.

“Republicans need to understand that Democrats in Congress, beholden to the ‘resistance’, aren’t interested in bipartisanship; they’re out for blood,” he said.

Democrats, for their part, say

they are out for accountability, not blood, intent on forcing a president who went largely unchecked by a Republican Congress during his first two years in office to come clean on the many scandals that have erupted involving his business, taxes, campaign and administration.

Lost in all this may be any chance of bipartisan policymaking.

At stake in the current fight is just US\$5.7 billion (\$\$7.7 billion) for Mr Trump’s promised border wall, roughly one-eighth of 1 per cent of the total federal Budget.

If one-eighth of 1 per cent of the total Budget can prompt the longest government shutdown in American history, then the potential for further clashes over the remaining 99.87 per cent seems considerable.

On issues like healthcare, taxes, climate change, guns and national security, the two sides start this era of divided government far apart.

Instead of talks to end the shutdown, the President spent at least part of his weekend defending himself against the suspicions about his affinity for Mr Putin.

He picked up the telephone on Saturday night to call into the Fox News show hosted by Ms Jeanine Pirro.

“I think it’s the most insulting article I’ve ever had written. And if you read the article, you’d see that they found absolutely nothing.”

NTIMES

Senate Republicans, feeling the heat, push for negotiations

LET’S DEAL

I would urge him to open up the government for a short period of time, like three weeks, before he pulls the plug... See if we can get a deal. If we can’t at the end of three weeks, all bets are off. See if he can do it by himself through the emergency powers.



SENATOR LINDSEY GRAHAM, on temporarily reopening the government while continuing negotiations.

WASHINGTON • Twenty-four days into the longest government shutdown in US history and with the White House and House Democrats no closer to a deal, pressure is ramping up on Senate Republicans to craft an exit plan that will get federal employees back to work and pull their party out of a deepening political quagmire.

In a sign that Republicans are increasingly concerned that the stand-off over President Donald Trump’s long-promised border wall is hurting their party, Senator Lindsey Graham has suggested temporarily reopening the government while continuing negotiations.

If talks do not bear fruit, Mr Graham said, Mr Trump could consider following through on his threat to bypass Congress and build the wall along the US-Mexico border by declaring a national emergency.

“I would urge him to open up the government for a short period of time, like three weeks, before he pulls the plug,” Mr Graham said on Fox News Sunday. “See if we can get a deal. If we can’t at the end of three weeks, all bets are off. See if he can do it by himself through the

emergency powers.”

The manoeuvring by a key Trump ally highlights the difficult balancing act Senate Republicans will probably face over the next two years, trapped between a mercurial President and an emboldened new House Democratic majority.

Tensions have flared inside the West Wing as negotiations stalled.

Last Friday, Mr Trump complained and used expletives about acting chief of staff Mick Mulvaney in front of congressional leaders, after the latter urged compromise on the administration’s demand for US\$5.7 billion (\$\$7.7 billion) in wall funding, said two Trump advisers.

Mr Trump was dismayed by Mr Mulvaney’s willingness to compromise, and sharply criticised him for taking a different tone.

Mr Trump and the Democrats remained far apart on Sunday.

Tweeting from the White House as the capital was blanketed by snow for the first time this year, Mr Trump continued to point the finger at Democrats, who he said were “everywhere but Washington as people await their pay”.

At the same time, Democrats

ramped up calls for Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell to take up House-passed legislation to fund the government, regardless of whether the President agrees.

Mr McConnell has taken a low public profile as the stalemate drags on, seemingly wary of being burnt once again by Mr Trump after the President did an abrupt about-face last month and opposed a temporary funding Bill that had cleared the Senate.

So far, three Republican senators – Cory Gardner of Colorado and Susan Collins of Maine, both running for re-election in states Mr Trump lost in 2016; and Lisa Murkowski of Alaska – have called for an immediate end to the shutdown even without the more than US\$5 billion Mr Trump has demanded for the wall.

The impasse left about 800,000 federal workers without a pay cheque last Friday, when lawmakers were back in their states.

Meanwhile, the Transportation Security Administration said there was a significant increase in the number of airport checkpoint personnel not reporting for duty.

The agency closed its checkpoint in Terminal B of Bush Intercontinental Airport in Houston on Sunday because of staffing issues associated with the shutdown.

Miami International Airport officials said they will reopen a terminal yesterday that was closed for parts of the weekend because of a staffing shortage caused by the shutdown. WASHINGTON POST

Shutdowns since 1976

Start date	President	Length in days
Dec 22, 2018	Donald Trump	24*
Dec 16, 1995	Bill Clinton	21
Oct 1, 1978	Jimmy Carter	17
Oct 1, 2013	Barack Obama	16
Oct 1, 1977	Jimmy Carter	12
Oct 1, 1979	Jimmy Carter	11
Oct 1, 1976	Gerald Ford	10
Nov 1, 1977	Jimmy Carter	8
Dec 1, 1977	Jimmy Carter	8
Nov 14, 1995	Bill Clinton	5
Dec 18, 1982	Ronald Reagan	3
Nov 11, 1983	Ronald Reagan	3
Oct 6, 1990	George H.W. Bush	3
Nov 21, 1981	Ronald Reagan	2
Oct 1, 1984	Ronald Reagan	2
Jan 20, 2018	Donald Trump	2
Oct 1, 1982	Ronald Reagan	1
Oct 4, 1984	Ronald Reagan	1
Oct 17, 1986	Ronald Reagan	1
Dec 19, 1987	Ronald Reagan	1
Feb 9, 2018	Donald Trump	1

*As at yesterday.

Note: Start dates are the beginning of each shutdown, which is one day after budget authority expired. The length of completed shutdowns is the number of full days before the day that funding was approved.

Source: NYTIMES STRAITS TIMES GRAPHICS

Trump threatens Turkey’s economy if Syrian Kurdish militia hit

ISTANBUL/RIYADH • US President Donald Trump threatened Turkey with economic devastation if it attacks a US-allied Kurdish militia in Syria, drawing a sharp rebuke from Ankara yesterday and reviving fears of another downturn in ties between the Nato allies.

Relations between the United States and Turkey have long been strained by Washington’s support for the Kurdish YPG, which Turkey views as an extension of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK) that is waging a decades-long insurgency in Turkey.

Speaking in Riyadh, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said he did not think the threat would change plans to withdraw troops from Syria.

Asked what Mr Trump meant by economic devastation, he said: “You’ll have to ask the President.”

“We have applied economic sanctions in many places, I assume he is speaking about those kinds of things,” Mr Pompeo said, adding that he had not spoken with Ankara since Mr Trump’s comment.

Mr Trump said on Sunday the US was starting the military pullout from Syria that he announced last month, but that it would continue to hit Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) fighters there.

“Will attack again from existing nearby base if it reforms. Will devastate Turkey economically if they hit Kurds. Create 20-mile safe zone... Likewise, do not want the Kurds to provoke Turkey,” Mr Trump wrote on Twitter.

Ankara is well aware of the cost of strained ties with the US.

A diplomatic crisis last year – when Mr Trump imposed sanctions



A Turkish military convoy in Kirikhan at the Syrian border last Saturday. Turkey has vowed to crush a US-backed Kurdish militia which it views as a terrorist group, but which has been a US ally in the fight against ISIS in Syria. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

on two of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan’s ministers and raised tariffs on Turkish metal exports – helped push the Turkish lira to a record low in August.

The lira slid as much as 1.6 per cent to 5.5450 against the US dollar and stood at 5.52 yesterday evening.

Turkish presidential spokesman Ibrahim Kalin said Mr Trump should respect Washington’s al-

liance with Ankara.

“Mr @realDonaldTrump it is a fatal mistake to equate Syrian Kurds with the PKK, which is on the US terrorists list, and its Syria branch PYD/YPG,” he wrote on Twitter.

“Terrorists can’t be your partners and allies. Turkey expects the US to honour our strategic partnership and doesn’t want it to be shadowed by terrorist propaganda.”

Mr Trump gave no details about

the safe-zone proposal, but Mr Pompeo said Washington wanted to provide security for those who have fought against ISIS and to prevent any attack on Turkey from Syria.

Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu said Ankara was not against the idea of a secure zone along the border, but said strategic partners and allies should not communicate over social media.

“Nothing can be achieved by

threatening Turkey economically. We need to look at how we can coordinate together and how we can solve this,” he said in a news conference.

The Kurdish YPG has been a US ally in the fight against the militants and it controls swathes of northern Syria. Mr Erdogan has vowed to crush it in the wake of Mr Trump’s decision to pull US troops out of the region. REUTERS

THE STRAITS TIMES

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The Straits Times says

Securing Singapore’s cyberhealth

The public report by a high-level panel tasked to probe last June’s cyber attack on SingHealth, Singapore’s worst data breach, has highlighted serious areas of concern. These include staff who fell prey to phishing attacks, weak administrator passwords, not applying a patch that could have stopped the hacking, and an IT cyber-security team that could not even recognise a security incident. To be fair to SingHealth, such failures reflect perhaps the confidence that comes from Singapore’s technological abilities. This could easily slip into a “won’t happen here” complacency that puts these institutions at risk. Although the Committee of Inquiry’s (COI) report is about SingHealth, it applies to other entities as well.

In the attack, hackers stole the personal data of 1.5 million patients and the outpatient prescription details of 160,000 people, including Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong. The patently political nature of the attack should alert all organisations, but particularly those in the public sector, to the danger of sophisticated cyber incursions that are linked usually to the national agendas and the technological prowess of states. Every organisation in Singapore must see itself as a potential victim of cyber predators who could breach its defences to achieve objectives that are unrelated to the mandate of those organisations. Cyber security is an irreplaceable part today of the alertness that Singapore has displayed traditionally to preserve its core interests.

The COI report notes pertinently that cyber security has to be seen as a risk management issue, and not just as a technical issue, where decisions are made at the appropriate management level. Thus, security must not be dependent on just one line of defence. What should be involved in cyber security is an entire organisational culture that is geared to the possibility, indeed perhaps the inevitability, of an attack at some point. Singapore’s public institutions would do well to abide by the adage that what can go wrong will do so most probably at some point, and adopt a pre-emptive approach that involves pondering the unthinkable, on the assumption the adversary is doing precisely that. In security, the weakest link in the chain holds the key to the resilience of the whole.

Operationally, this mindset must translate into the performance of enhanced security checks, especially on critical information infrastructure systems. Vulnerability assessments, safety reviews and certification of vendor products are par for the course. Also, a software upgrade policy, with a focus on security, must be implemented to increase cyber resilience. Institutionally, a proper governance structure must be in place to make certain that policy is adhered to. These are valuable recommendations that SingHealth should adopt to preserve its reputation and place in the life of Singaporeans.

By Invitation

The healing power of forgiveness

The act of forgiving frees not just the transgressor from the wrong done but also the victim from being caught in the grip of toxic anger



Chong Siow Ann

For The Straits Times

One evening in June 2015, a 21-year-old school dropout and self-styled white supremacist Dylann Roof walked into the Mother Emanuel Church in downtown Charleston, South Carolina.

Armed with a .45-calibre Glock semi-automatic that he had bought with his birthday money and eight magazines loaded with hollow-point bullets, he made his way to an ongoing Bible-study class with a dozen people and sat down among them. As the people closed their eyes in prayer, Roof stood up and shot dead nine of them.

Shocking as it was, the bloodbath in the church with mostly black worshippers was sadly yet another mass shooting that has become all too painfully common in the United States.

Yet, in the aftermath of this tragedy, something uncommon happened. At his arraignment hearing, relatives of those slain by Roof stepped up, one after another, and openly forgave him. It was a magnanimous act of forgiveness that can be hard for most people to fathom.

The Scottish writer and former bishop of Edinburgh, Richard Holloway, describes forgiveness as “a mysterious force in human relationships that can heal wounds and mend shattered relationships, not only between individuals, but also between groups and sometimes even between nations”.

However, he admits to having difficulty in defining this “mysterious” something that is uniquely human and which everyone of us needs in our lives.

who has wilfully and grievously offended us.

But there is another visceral reaction when someone transgresses against us – embedded within that anger is the impulse for revenge.

It is with this sentiment in mind that many theologians and philosophers have asserted that forgiveness is not just about “letting go” of the anger and bitterness against the transgressor, but also forswearing revenge – something that would take time and considerable effort. As Christian writer C.S. Lewis noted pithily: “Everyone says forgiveness is a lovely idea, until they have something to forgive.”

That is not to say payback is not without its uses. Punishment meted out to transgressors can help their victims feel some redress has been made, losses have been made good, justice is done; the victim might even attain a sense of mastery and a restoration of self-esteem and status.

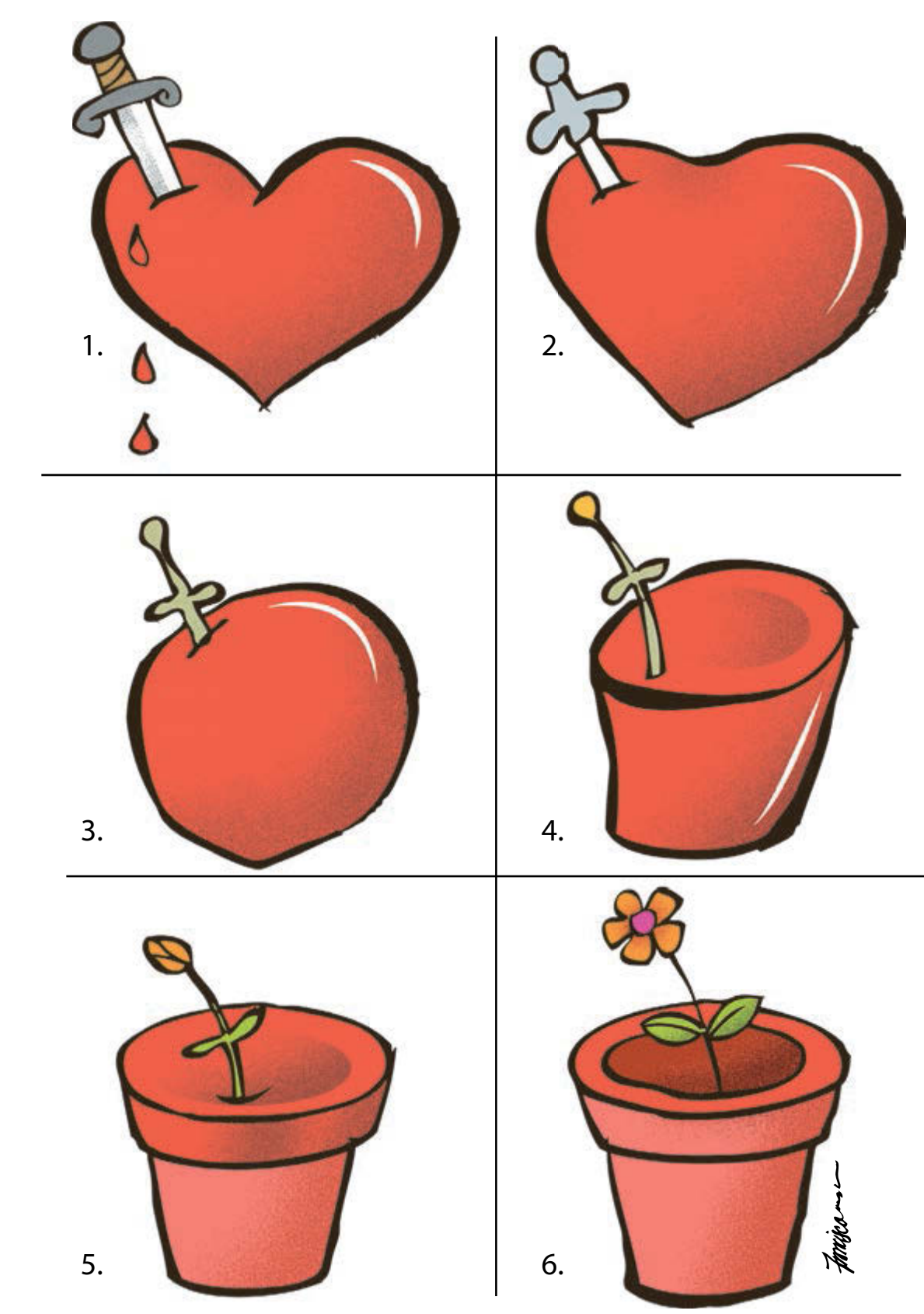
On the flip side, the act of forgiving may not always be appropriate: sometimes, a person who feels impotent and vulnerable may feel pressured to let the offender off the hook; in such instances, forgiveness might well end up condoning or enabling further wrongdoing.

But forgiveness could also be a show of strength forged in a crucible of powerlessness. A commenter (as quoted in the New Yorker) puts the action of the relatives of the Emanuel Nine in the context of a black community that has had to cope with a legacy of powerlessness.

Seen in this perspective, their act of forgiveness was a complex response of “the weak overcoming the strong”, the manifestation of a kind of resilience that resists yielding to fear and hate.

Given the history of slavery and persistent racial discrimination against the black community, forgiveness was also a determined expression of their humanity and their Christian faith.

“I will never get to talk to her ever again. I will never be able to hold her again, but I forgive you and have mercy on your soul. You hurt me. You hurt a lot of people. But God forgives you and I forgive you,”



said a daughter whose mother was one of those killed by Roof.

Still, there would be certain situations where the sheer evil and enormity of the offence can make it understandably difficult – if not impossible – to forgive, as in the case of parents having to forgive a serial paedophile who had abducted, violated and murdered their child.

It would be an unreasonable tyranny to impose an obligation on people to forgive in all circumstances. Nor can we forgive a wrong done to someone else who is either unwilling to or no longer alive to make that decision, in what is commonly known as surrogate or “third-party” forgiveness. We simply do not have that right nor authority.

Holloway wrote that sometimes there is even “a strength and grandeur in the refusal to forgive”, and that “refusal to forgive can be the righteous thing to do, the thing that justice commands”.

He gave the example of Simon Wiesenthal, a Jewish-Austrian Holocaust survivor who spent the rest of his life in the relentless pursuit of Nazi war criminals and bringing them to justice. But even

Perhaps true forgiveness can be achieved only when it is earned... For a victim to truly let go of his or her anger, the perpetrator must first admit responsibility and culpability, acknowledge that what he has done was hurtful and wrong, show remorse for it, apologise and offer emotional and/or material recompense. This validates the depth and extent of the victim's grievance and could be a salve over the emotional wound.

he seemed to have wrestled with the morality of forgiveness.

Later in his life, Wiesenthal wrote a little parable, The Sunflower.

In this story, which some believe is a personal memoir, a mortally wounded SS man asked a Jewish prisoner – also named Simon Wiesenthal – for forgiveness for his crimes, which included the murder of three Jews by his own hand and participation in a squad that murdered many more.

In the story, Wiesenthal did not absolve him but was haunted afterwards by uncertainty about whether that was the right thing to do. He closed the story by suggesting the reader mentally change places with him, and asks: “What would I have done?”

MEANING OF FORGIVENESS

Perhaps true forgiveness can be achieved only when it is earned, which means that there must be a bilateral relationship of some sort between the perpetrator and the victim, and in which both sides take some needed steps.

For a victim to truly let go of his or her anger, the perpetrator must first admit responsibility and culpability, acknowledge that what

he has done was hurtful and wrong, show remorse for it, apologise and offer emotional and/or material recompense. This validates the depth and extent of the victim’s grievance and could be a salve over the emotional wound.

The process of forgiving usually starts with an apology, despite the fact that even a truly sincere one does not and cannot undo what has been done.

And yet, this is precisely what it manages to do in some cases. After an apology is made, the offence gets turned over in the psyche of the recipient who, after examining it from various perspectives, finds it easier to let go of the feelings of grievance over the past wrong.

It is this letting go and giving up of vengefulness that has been so much emphasised as the reason to forgive – forgive, so that you may be liberated from the toxic grip of anger. And it can indeed be toxic. Studies find that anger, vengefulness and all the negative ruminations that come with not forgiving can damage our health – increasing our blood pressure, predisposing us to anxiety, clinical depression and shortening our lives.

Indeed, psychological interventions that incorporated forgiveness have successfully reduced symptoms in patients with coronary artery disease and chronic pain.

Other than this therapeutic benefit, there is also a moral angle to it.

Forgiveness is what a good person would seek because it expresses certain fundamental moral ideals and values. These include ideals of empathy, spiritual growth, truth telling, accountability, responsibility, restraint, respect and reconciliation.

It is one way that, as humans, we can live with one another – since we would always have that proclivity to do horrible things to one another, we have also worked out this apparently simple but profoundly difficult process to assuage some of the fallout from all that harm.

Just as the inability or refusal to forgive has the tragic effect of tethering the victims to the bitter past, and an obsessive and futile wish for an imagined better past without that trespass; for an unforgiven penitent, it can also be a psychic imprisonment that chains him to that original trespass.

I once inflicted a grievous hurt on one of my patients. A momentary lapse of my attention during a routine clinic visit led to a prescription error which, in turn, led to my patient suffering a relapse of her illness and a subsequent lengthy hospitalisation, which rather badly disrupted her life at the time.

I owned up to my mistake, apologised to my patient and her family, and made some reparation through the hospital where I practised.

After hearing me out, my patient and her family forgave me. That act of forgiveness lightened that burden of oppressive guilt and, in some ways, freed me to move forward and continue as her attending psychiatrist to this day.

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• Professor Chong Siow Ann, a psychiatrist, is vice-chairman of the medical board (research) at the Institute of Mental Health.

Ensuring peace of mind when hospital bills add up



Salma Khalik

Senior Health Correspondent

People should be responsible for their own health – whether it is to stay fit or seek treatment when illness strikes.

So there is nothing wrong in having them pay for their own healthcare needs. After all, we pay for our own housing, food, clothes and a host of other things.

Of course, all the rest are positive experiences and people are happy to pay, while treatment for health problems is not something they want, but unfortunately need. And not everyone plans for it.

As society develops and becomes more caring, its social conscience dictates that it takes care of the less well off.

So there are government subsidies to which every resident is entitled, and for the poor, the safety net of Medifund, a government endowment fund that picks up the tab for those who can't afford to.

Singapore has gone a couple of steps beyond that.

Knowing that not everyone plans for their healthcare needs, it introduced Medisave in 1984. This forced saving from people's work income was originally meant to cater to expensive hospital care,

but the scope has since been expanded to cover certain outpatient preventive care. Not everyone would need the same amount for medical treatments. But no one knows how much each would need. That makes saving for healthcare needs difficult. In 2015, the Government made MediShield Life a compulsory national basic health insurance.

Payouts are based on subsidised charges at public healthcare institutes. Those who want more expensive private treatment have the option of buying Integrated Plans (IPs) provided by private insurers. Two in three people here do so.

With MediShield Life, people who plan to seek only subsidised treatment would no longer need to keep aside huge amounts of money to pay for it.

Instead, they should just need enough in their Medisave accounts to pay the annual premiums for MediShield Life (these range from \$815 to \$1,530 a year, with subsidies ranging from 15 per cent to 60 per cent for those who qualify), the annual deductible of \$1,500 to \$3,000 which they need to pay before insurance kicks in, and the co-payment of 3 per cent to 10 per cent of the rest of the bill.

MediShield Life will give people peace of mind, promised the Government.

LIMITED COVERAGE

Not everyone can be accommodated. The way it was designed meant that one in 10 people would not get full coverage

from the insurance. For example, someone who does not get the maximum government subsidy – this could be because he is not Singaporean, or is relatively better off and so gets a lower subsidy – or someone whose cumulative bills bust the annual cap of \$100,000.

Even today, the MediShield Life website states that only one in 10 has bills that exceed the claims limits.

Earlier this month we found that this figure of one in 10 no longer holds. The proportion of subsidised patients who have bills that bust the claimable limits has doubled to two in 10 – or one in five – in the three years since the launch of MediShield Life.

How critical is this change? Very.

There is currently a five-year moratorium on premiums and benefits. If three years into MediShield Life has seen the proportion of patients who do not enjoy full cover double, what will happen in the next two years?

How many more people will see their insurance coverage shrink?

It is important to know more about the 20 per cent of subsidised patients who do not enjoy full coverage. For example, who are they, what proportions of their bills were not covered, and why?

The Ministry of Health (MOH), in a letter published in The Straits Times Forum pages, said that half of those whose bills were above the claimable amounts busted the limits by \$230 or less.

It added that bills that bust the claim limits “tend to be those of a more complex nature” or those for cases involving higher-income

patients who received lower means-tested subsidies.

Most people would accept that it is fair that wealthier patients who do not get the full subsidy would have larger bills, and would not be surprised or upset should these higher bills exceed the claimable limits.

But it is highly worrying if a Singaporean who, after means testing, enjoys full subsidy, and still faces bills that bust the claim limits, even though he has not exceeded the annual cap of \$100,000 – simply because he required “more complex” treatment.

The MOH told The Straits Times that in 2017, nine in 10 Singaporean patients received the maximum subsidies.

As for coverage of “more complex” treatments, that is exactly what most people buy insurance for. These are the sort of problems that people usually can't plan for.

For people insured on private plans, you can argue that it is for them to read the fine print and decide for themselves whether to go ahead with treatment at a particular facility or switch doctors or hospitals to enjoy maximum insurance coverage.

But patients receiving treatment at a subsidised facility and claiming from MediShield Life have little choice. So it is even more important for the national insurance scheme to deliver on its promise to give people peace of mind.

And people with big subsidised bills are precisely the ones MediShield Life was designed to look after.

SOURCE OF PROBLEM

But before we castigate MediShield Life, we need to ascertain if the problem lies with the insurance, or with the fees charged by public healthcare institutes.

On the whole, MediShield Life has helped many people cover their large healthcare bills. The amount it has paid out has gone up from \$448.1 million to settle 344,000 claims in 2015 (MediShield Life was launched in November that year) to \$845 million for 550,000 claims in 2017.

It's not just more people who received coverage, but they also received about 18 per cent more based on an average reimbursement of \$1,302 in 2015 and \$1,536 in 2017. So it has provided good cover for a lot of patients.

But what accounts for the rise in proportion of patients whose bills exceeded MediShield Life claim limits?

Have public hospitals raised their fees so much over the past three years that the number of subsidised patients whose bills bust the claim limits has doubled?

Given the figures, it would appear to be so. In which case, the MOH should look at whether the higher fees are justified or if more could be done to keep a lid on rising costs.

This is especially so if there is a big difference in pricing between public institutes for similar procedures. It is worth asking how one institute could do a procedure for so much less when the profiles of the patients are similar.

Are patients being charged more at some places than is strictly necessary, because everyone is covered by insurance and little out-of-pocket payment is required; because of inefficiencies; or for other reasons than the cost of the treatment itself?

Take the example of cataract surgery for one eye. Three in four subsidised patients at the National University Hospital are charged less than \$1,006. At the Singapore National Eye Centre on the other hand, three in four subsidised patients pay \$1,398 or more.

It is regrettable that many subsidised patients had to pay more from their Medisave accounts or from their pockets to cover bills that had busted the claim limits.

But now that the issue has surfaced, one hopes that changes are under way and MediShield Life will live up to its promise to provide Singaporeans with peace of mind when faced with big subsidised hospital bills.

After all, for one in three residents, MediShield Life is the only medical insurance that person has.

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MediShield Life has helped many people cover their large healthcare bills. The amount it has paid out has gone up from \$448.1 million to settle 344,000 claims in 2015 (MediShield Life was launched in November that year) to \$845 million for 550,000 claims in 2017. ST FILE PHOTO

Trump's secret allies in China

Chinese private entrepreneurs play a big part in driving the economy, but face similar obstacles as foreign firms

Andrew Browne

In his tariff war with China, United States President Donald Trump has some hidden allies.

Just about every complaint US trade negotiators raised in Beijing last week – not to mention their doubts about the sincerity of China's concessions – are shared by Chinese entrepreneurs, who feel as underappreciated and unwelcome as their foreign counterparts.

Their common enemy – the Chinese industrial state, an animus summed up in China by the lament “*guo jin, min tui*” (the state advances, the private sector retreats).

This reality underscores how tough it will be for the Trump administration to roll back a set of statist industrial policies that are rooted more in politics and ideology than in economics.

At the same time, it presents

Mr Trump with an opportunity – to leverage internal Chinese pressure to open doors for international investors and a domestic Chinese constituency with a vital stake in playing by global trading rules.

In his efforts to ensure Communist Party control over every facet of Chinese life, Chinese President Xi Jinping has smothered the animal spirits of the country's private businessmen, who account for more than 60 per cent of economic output and 80 per cent of employment.

Even though the party welcomed capitalists to join in 2001, they have long had an uneasy relationship with the state authority.

Many have been caught up in Mr Xi's anti-corruption campaign, paying the price for a pervasive rent-seeking culture in which bribing officials was necessary to secure business deals, land and bank loans.

Some wealthy entrepreneurs are moving their money offshore

because they fear their tainted earnings will be confiscated.

Others are putting off hiring and investing as the economy slows.

Mr Fred Hu, the founder of Primavera Capital Group, compares their current mood to the years immediately following the 1989 Tiananmen Square crackdown, which were marked by “tremendous uncertainty, concerns and worries” about the future.

The fact is that the world needs Chinese private enterprises to succeed if China is to remain a driver of global growth. And their demands mirror those of multinationals: better access to service markets now dominated by state monopolies in energy, finance, telecommunications and transport; better protection for their intellectual property; a reduction in subsidies, cheap financing and other advantages enjoyed by the state sector; and a desire to be left alone by meddling bureaucrats.

No less than foreigners, local players would love to get rid of the party cells implanted in their companies.

What's more, a policy shift away from state enterprises, which dominate old-line industries, towards private businesses, which excel at innovative services, would help boost Chinese domestic consumption and reduce the household savings glut that shows up in external imbalances.

It is these distortions that have destabilised the global trading order and sparked a protectionist backlash in much of the West.

Mr Xi will never willingly dismantle the state-led industrial structure he sees as key to the survival of the party. Privatisation of state enterprises is not on the table, even though they suck up 50 per cent of all credit despite accounting for just 20 per cent of gross domestic product – a colossal misallocation of financial resources.

Still, there are two reasons to think that Mr Xi may be ready to make genuine concessions.

First, as the sombre headlines in Chinese newspapers make plain, the economic slowdown, exacerbated by trade tensions with the US, has stunned the Chinese leadership.

Until a few months ago, the People's Daily was bombarding readers with stories lauding “Made

in China 2025”, a blueprint for Chinese high-tech supremacy, and boasting of a “China Solution” to global challenges. Moviegoers were treated to a documentary called *Amazing China* that extolled Mr Xi's accomplishments in science, technology and poverty reduction.

Today, China's industrial ambitions get scant mention in the media and cultural czars have pulled the propaganda film from cinemas. If nothing else, Mr Trump has got Beijing's attention.

Second, cracking open Chinese markets wider to both domestic and foreign competition would be the surest way for Mr Xi to revive China's flagging growth.

Private enterprises produce three times the return on assets compared with state companies and, as the providers of almost all new jobs, they are critical to boosting consumption and weaning the economy off its reliance on credit-fuelled investment.

The International Monetary Fund calculates that while China's per capita GDP, measured in terms of purchasing power, is similar to Brazil's, its consumption per capita is comparable only to Nigeria's.

If the Chinese consumed like the Brazilians, their spending would double.

The government understands the need to appease the private sector.

Since the middle of last year, it has been trying to encourage banks to lend more to private companies. Its efforts have made scant progress though, in large part because the traditional banking system is not set up to issue such loans.

Meanwhile, the government, trying to head off a potential financial crisis, has been cracking down on the shadow banks where small firms used to seek financing.

The good news is that a comprehensive blueprint for economic reforms that would energise the private sector already exists. Five years ago, when Mr Xi ascended to power, he unveiled a 60-point plan that pledged “to let the market play a decisive role in the allocation of resources”.

Unfortunately, the document has been gathering dust ever since.

Resurrecting those abandoned pledges in the name of rescuing private Chinese enterprises would give Mr Xi the political cover to accede to some of Mr Trump's demands. A two-for-one bargain is available. China would be wise to take it. BLOOMBERG

• Andrew Browne is the editorial director of the Bloomberg New Economy Forum. He was previously China editor, senior correspondent and columnist for the Wall Street Journal.

End of an era as US Democrats seek a radical new voice

The party's centre of gravity has shifted left in response to Trump and growing inequality

Edward Luce

Listen carefully and you can hear the retreat of the Democratic establishment. Incrementalism served its purpose: It made Democrats electable again and safe for Wall Street. But it has had its day.

The generation of Democrats that downplayed concerns about inequality and embraced global markets is being replaced by a far bolder political voice.

No matter who takes the Democratic nomination in 2020, they will speak for a radicalised party in quest of the new New Deal.

They owe a debt of gratitude to President Donald Trump. However much resurgent liberals detest America's 45th president, they can thank him for sweeping away the mindset of systematic caution that has mesmerised Democratic leaders for a generation.

It began with president Bill Clinton's New Democrats in the late 1980s. It ended in 2016 when Mrs Hillary Clinton lost to Mr Trump.

In between, it spanned Mr Al Gore, the losing 2000 nominee, Mr John Kerry, who lost in 2004, and president Barack Obama, whose eight-year legacy is now being destroyed by Mr Trump.

Mr Trump has served both as a call to arms and as an example of how establishments can be defeated.

On the first, Mr Trump has demolished whatever case remained for the idea that Democrats must forever ready themselves for a promised land of bipartisan amity.

In practice, many thought that stance had already been discredited by Mr Newt Gingrich, the take-no-prisoners Republican Speaker of the House during the Clinton years. Others thought the wrecking ball the Tea Party took to Mr Obama's fiscal plans had finally settled the argument.

No matter how much Democrats tacked to the centre, the rewards for this virtue never came. Republicans simply moved further to the right. Democratic presidents, such as Mr Clinton, created budget surpluses. Republicans, such as president George W Bush, duly spent them on tax cuts.

Inequality is far worse today than in 1992, even though Democrats held the White House for more than half that time.

Median incomes, meanwhile, have barely shifted.

The initial anger over the 2008 financial crash was captured by the Tea Party. It is nevertheless hard to believe the self-proclaimed socialist Bernie Sanders would have nearly defeated Mrs Clinton had she not developed such close financial ties to Wall Street.

But it was Mr Trump who changed the weather. He showed that you could bamboozle a hostile establishment and still win an election.

Then he switched horses and pursued an aggressive Republican agenda. From tax cuts and deregulation to gun rights and anti-abortion judges, Mr Trump now has Republican lawmakers eating out of his hand. Those who still believed it would be possible to work across the aisle – and who pined for the days of Rockefeller Republicans – were robbed of any remaining force. Mr Trump has done a service for the American left.

Reality has also lent it a helping hand. Regardless of your ideology, today's numbers paint a stark picture.

Ten years into the US recovery, median household incomes are, in real terms, still much what they were in 1999. The top one per cent of households own more wealth than the bottom 90 per cent. America's average life expectancy has started to decline.

Mr Trump has made inequality worse. But he is not its author. The



numbers were almost as bleak at the end of Mr Obama's two terms. So tinkering no longer holds much appeal.

Much of the focus is on who should be the Democratic nominee to challenge Mr Trump. That obviously matters.

But the significant point is that the party's centre of gravity has shifted. Whoever the challenger turns out to be, whether Mr Joe Biden, the former vice-president, Ms Elizabeth Warren, the economic populist, Mr Beto O'Rourke, the sunny optimist, or Mr Sanders, their platform will have to reflect that shift. Stances such as "Medicare for all", a "Green New Deal", and public election financing will have to be part of the package. So too will higher taxes.

Attention has also been lavished on Ms Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, the 29-year-old Democratic socialist and youngest member of Congress.

More notable is the respect her ideas, including a top tax rate of 70 per cent, command among establishment Democrats.

"The congresswoman is right," Dr Lawrence Summers, Mr Clinton's former Treasury

Secretary, said last week.

Dr Summers personified the Washington consensus of the 1990s. Like economist John Maynard Keynes, however, he says he changes his mind when the facts do.

They no longer fit the arc-of-history Democrats used to narrate. "The false doctrines of the neoliberal priesthood are losing their hold," writes Mr Nick Hanauer, the entrepreneur who made his fortune with Amazon. America's left is turning into a factory of new ideas. Some of them, such as a universal basic income, may be questionable. Others, such as breaking up monopolies, are more promising.

Either way, for the first time in decades, America's intellectual energy is now on the left.

Some liken the ferment to the "bold persistent experimentation" of president Franklin Roosevelt, author of the 1930s New Deal.

Doubters compare it with the false dawn of George McGovern, who lost in a 1972 landslide to Richard Nixon.

Whichever view proves correct, the Clinton-Obama era is drawing to a close. A new one is just beginning.

FINANCIAL TIMES

Ms Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez speaking to activists who were protesting at Capitol Hill in November last year. The 29-year-old Democrat is the youngest member of Congress and one of her ideas is to implement a top tax rate of 70 per cent. PHOTO: NYTIMES

Scientists and the danger of a competitive culture

Faye Flam

The researcher claiming to have created the first gene-edited babies, a set of twins, might be afflicted with a form of ethical Dunning-Kruger syndrome – ignorance of one's own ignorance.

In interviews and a promotional YouTube video, Dr He Jiankui telegraphed faith that his experiment will be remembered as a pioneering feat and a landmark in medical progress.

The field as a whole condemned this use of gene editing as unethical and criminally negligent.

But even so, the episode should prompt scientists to take a good hard look in the mirror. The drive to be a pioneer is part of scientific culture. Being first is rewarded with glory, fame, prizes and authority. People listen to you, whether or not you possess a modicum of good judgment. Rule breaking gets conflated with independent thinking and innovation. Being impervious to rules and what others think can be an asset in pursuit of knowledge.

Just look at Dr James Watson, who is back in the news, thanks to a new PBS documentary. Dr Watson was a big winner in the race to discover the structure of DNA, but the arrogant, narcissistic style that helped him believe in his own novel thinking and propelled him to stardom later cost him his job and earned him a reputation as racist windbag.

I started thinking about the effect of scientific competition while discussing the gene-editing case with McGill University bioethicist Jonathan Kimmelman.

If you're a meticulous and conscientious researcher, he said, that's great for society and possibly bad for your career.

Although some news outlets have referred to Dr He as a rogue scientist, that's not entirely accurate. He absorbed his image of what a great scientist should be from the wider culture.

"It's important to recognise that this person trained at important US institutions and is a product of mainstream science," said Professor Kimmelman. "This is not someone who taught himself with a cookbook manual and was working in his garage."

Prof Kimmelman has written a book about the now infamous 1999 gene therapy experiments at the University of Pennsylvania. Investigative reports showed how financial conflicts of interest, combined with the desire to be heroes, drove the researchers there to rush human trials of gene therapy. That came to a crashing halt when the therapy killed a subject, 18-year-old Jesse Gelsinger. Had nobody died, the Penn team might have been hailed as winners.

Dr He's gene editing experiment, however, will be remembered as unethical, even if the babies remain healthy. The benefits are marginal compared to the risks; the treatment was aimed at making the twins resistant to HIV, but there are much safer and more reliable ways of avoiding infection.

That same winner-take-all culture may explain something about Dr Watson, now 90, whose racist and sexist statements have made him so toxic to the scientific community that the head of the Broad Institute, Professor Eric Lander, had to apologise last year after boasting Dr Watson's achievement.

An insightful piece in the medical website Stat paraphrases Dr Watson's colleagues pondering how someone so smart could be so insensitive, so resistant to the 21st century science on race, and, ultimately, so self-destructive: "The answer, they say, lies in Watson's historic achievements – most notably, co-discovering the structure of DNA in 1953 – and the way he accomplished them. They inflated his belief not only in his genius but also in how to succeed: by listening to his gut, by opposing the establishment consensus, and by barely glancing at the edifice of facts on which a scientific field is built."

That is, ignoring other people helped him get ahead, and when the risk paid off, it reinforced the perception that he was smarter than everyone else in every way.

A similar brand of narcissism comes through in various interviews with Dr Kary Mullis, who won a Nobel Prize for his work on polymerase chain reaction – a way to amplify DNA that revolutionised criminal forensics and genetic testing. In his 1999 book, detailed in a London Review of Books piece titled Nobel Savage, Dr Mullis claims that HIV does not cause Aids, and that psychologists are idiots for not giving enough credence to astrology.

Dr He's career looks likely dead. And the lesson is not just for him, but also for scientists, and for us all: Rewarding boldness in medical research – at the expense of care and thoughtfulness – is surely not in our best interest. WASHINGTON POST

The episode should prompt scientists to take a good hard look in the mirror. The drive to be a pioneer is part of scientific culture. Being first is rewarded with glory, fame, prizes and authority. People listen to you, whether or not you possess a modicum of good judgment. Rule breaking gets conflated with independent thinking and innovation. Being impervious to rules and what others think can be an asset in pursuit of knowledge.

The rise of the Anti-Europeans

Right-wing politicians are joining forces to cripple the EU in a critical election year

Anne Applebaum

In theory, the European Union's parliamentary elections are the most international in the world.

The winners serve in a multinational legislature. They speak to one another with the help of hundreds of translators. They are members of transnational parties: In the Parliament buildings in Brussels and Strasbourg, centre-left Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) from across Europe sit with the Party of European Socialists, centre-right MEPs caucus with the European People's Party, and so on.

Nevertheless, European elections have never quite fulfilled this multinational promise. Usually they consist of dozens of campaigns, each dominated by national debates. In most years, the German Christian Democrats don't go on the hustings on behalf of their Swedish counterparts, and the Portuguese input into the Slovakian elections is pretty negligible.

But this year is different. This year, the European elections, set for late May, have

continent-wide themes and a continent-wide significance. Ironically, or perhaps absurdly, that is because this year, the anti-Europeans – the politicians who want to sweep the institutions away altogether – are making a public attempt to work together, across national lines, to achieve common goals.

Strange though it sounds, this phenomenon, the Nationalist International (or perhaps the "Populist International") is not new.

The online activists, trolls and bots of the far right and the alt-right have long cooperated in cyberspace. In advance of 2017's German elections, I was part of a research team that found the international alt-right sharing stories concocted by Russian state media and retweeting racist memes in support of the Alternative for Germany (AfD), Germany's anti-European party.

We found a similar nexus of online activists – Russian, American, German, French, even Polish – working together to denigrate the Swedish political system during their elections, too.

Now some of that long-standing, semi-covert online coordination is openly moving offline.

Last week, Mr Matteo Salvini, the xenophobic, nationalist Italian Deputy Prime Minister, travelled to Warsaw to meet the leaders of Law and Justice, Poland's xenophobic,

nationalist ruling party.

Mr Salvini declared the opening of a "Polish-Italian axis"; their meeting was also hailed by Mr Viktor Orban, the Hungarian leader, who famously rails against non-existent immigrants (there are very few in Hungary) whenever he is under pressure for corruption or abuse of power.

Mr Salvini has also held news conferences with French far-right leader Marine Le Pen, as well as his Austrian counterpart Heinz-Christian Strache.

At each one, Mr Salvini promised big changes, a new party, a pushback against immigration and against "Brussels".

He has met Mr Stephen Bannon too, though Mr Bannon's own attempts to create a European alt-right movement (helpfully called "The Movement") have stalled. Alas, its planned activities appear to be illegal in most European countries; more to the point, its platform is pretty vague.

One of Mr Bannon's Italy-based collaborators did show up in Warsaw in December under the banner of a militant Catholic organisation. He made a notably dull speech that attracted almost no attention at all. This failure points to a deeper problem for Europe's nationalist right.

They can agree that they are "against" things, such as immigration. But what are they for?

Destruction is easy; building is hard.

More importantly, the number of immigrants is actually plunging, and alternative sources of self-righteous anger aren't universally shared.

Italian and Austrian nationalists have already clashed in South Tyrol, a partly German-speaking province of Italy, for example; and French nationalists want Eastern Europeans to go home.

Most of the far right in Europe, from Ms Le Pen to Mr Salvini to Mr Orban, are enthusiastically pro-Russian; Polish counterparts, with a few notable exceptions, are not.

But we have seen this movie before, and we know how it ends.

After all, the precursor of this movement – its godfather, one might say – was Mr Nigel Farage, the anti-European nihilist who led Britain into Brexit.

He, too, had no positive agenda; he, too, used his EU parliamentary salary to torpedo the institution.

The result was the worst constitutional and political crisis in Britain in many decades, and political polarisation that may not end in our lifetimes.

The same fate awaits the rest of Europe if the rest of the political spectrum fails to unify, fails to set the agenda and fails to sell the benefits of the union – political, economic, environmental, even civilisational – to a new generation.

Whatever happens, this will be the most interesting European election campaign there has ever been, not least because this time around there is so much to lose.

WASHINGTON POST

BIG PICTURE



WEATHER

Windy, with passing showers in the afternoon.
High 34 deg C **Low** 24 deg C
24-hr PSI as of 5pm yesterday: 37 to 55 (Moderate)



PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Ski resorts left out in the cold

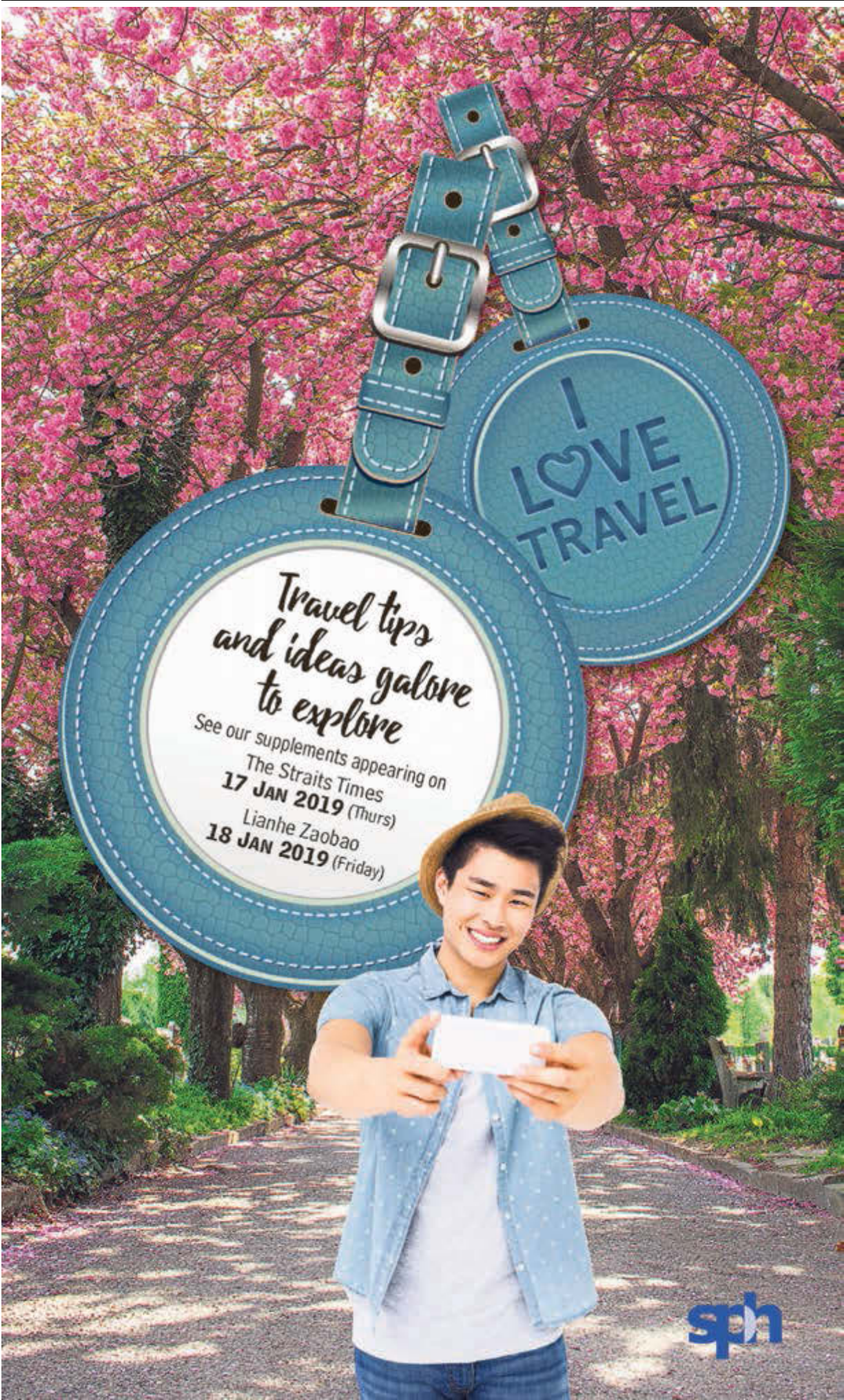
Heavy snowfall in parts of Austria has left ski resorts buried under mounds of snow, as seen by this ski lift that serves the Hochkar ski area.

The mountainous area, about 150km west of Vienna, was declared a disaster zone earlier last

week because of snow more than 3.5m deep. The winter storm has left more than 2,000 people trapped in villages and ski resorts, and over 4,000 households without electricity.

At the weekend, three German

skiers were killed in an avalanche near the Austrian ski resort of Lech am Arlberg, reported BBC. This brings the number of weather-related deaths in Europe this month to at least 24, reported the Associated Press.



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THE STRAITS TIMES

C1 BUSINESS



YANG BAN SENG
COMFORTDELGRO CEO
TO TAKE HELM AT
SBS TRANSIT C3

While construction demand is forecast to grow over the next four years, industry players warn that smaller local firms will have to prepare to face a more competitive market.
ST FILE PHOTO



MORE CHALLENGES LIE AHEAD

Looking ahead, the global climate is challenging and expectations still need to be moderated.



MR JOHNNY LIM, executive director of construction firm Teambuild, on the need for smaller local firms to temper their expectations for the coming years.

to be between \$27 billion and \$34 billion per year for 2020 and 2021, and between \$28 billion and \$35 billion per year for 2022 and 2023.

BCA chief executive officer Hugh Lim said in his welcome address that last year's upturn "suggests that the built environment may have turned a corner in terms of construction demand".

Mr Johnny Lim, executive director of construction firm Teambuild, said his company was awarded more projects last year than in 2017. Teambuild is helping to build some residential developments as well as a nursing home.

However, he added: "Some other local firms may still find it quite challenging, and there was some consolidation in the industry last year."

He said that many of the projects that make up the construction demand are infrastructural ones that usually go to bigger local players or overseas companies, and not to smaller local ones.

He revealed that he secured last year's projects through a more competitive tendering process, and expects the profit margins for Teambuild's latest projects to be lower.

"Looking ahead, the global climate is challenging and expectations still need to be moderated," said Mr Lim.

Mr Kenneth Loo, president of the Singapore Contractors Association, which represents about 3,000 companies, agreed that smaller local firms will have a "smaller bite of the cherry". He said: "The sentiment on the ground is still not rosy."

The BCA also announced an enhancement of the Building Innovation Panel, an inter-agency panel that helps with the regulatory clearance of technologies.

Firms use it as a single platform to work with relevant agencies instead of approaching different agencies.

From next month, the panel's scope will be expanded to include areas such as advanced and sustainable building materials, and green building technology. Previously, it was limited to technology that raised construction productivity.

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Construction demand here expected to stay strong: BCA

Public sector contracts continue to prop up sector, but year will be challenging for small firms

Derek Wong

Construction demand is expected to remain strong this year due to sustained public sector contracts, as the industry continues to recover from a challenging three-year spell.

Total construction demand, which is the value of construction contracts to be awarded, is expected to be between \$27 billion and \$32 billion this year despite ad-

ditional cooling measures in the private property market and the delay in construction of the Kuala Lumpur-Singapore high-speed rail project last year.

Public construction demand, expected to be between \$16.5 billion and \$19.5 billion this year, is set to make up about 60 per cent of projected demand for the year.

An estimated total of \$30.5 billion in contracts was awarded last year, according to the Building and Construction Authority (BCA).

It represents a 23 per cent increase in construction demand compared with the year before, said Mr Zaquy Mohamad, Minister of State for National Development and Manpower, at the BCA-Redas Built Environment and Property Prospects

\$27b-\$32b

Expected construction demand this year.

\$27b-\$34b

Expected construction demand a year for 2020, 2021.

\$28b-\$35b

Expected construction demand a year for 2022, 2023.

Seminar held yesterday at the Grand Copthorne Waterfront.

"Many firms have felt the pressure. Construction demand declined for three consecutive years from 2015 to 2017," Mr Zaquy said in his speech, adding that the Government's move to bring forward \$1.4 billion in public projects to start between 2017 and early this year has helped firms ride out the downturn.

Public sector demand contributed \$18.4 billion last year with projects such as civil engineering works. Private sector demand was \$12.1 billion, supported by projects such as the redevelopment of collective-sale sites, the sales of which were concluded in 2017 and the first half of last year.

Construction demand is forecast

\$75m grant to lift S'pore's standing as enterprise financing hub

Ng Jun Sen
Business Correspondent

In a bid to raise Singapore's status as an enterprise financing hub, a \$75 million grant will help defray costs of enterprises hoping to list on the Singapore bourse, support research initiatives and subsidise the salaries of Singaporean equity research analysts.

The Grant for Equity Market Singapore (Gems) was launched yesterday by Finance Minister Heng Swee Keat at a UBS Wealth Insights conference at Marina Bay Sands Expo and Convention Centre. Funded by the Monetary Authority of Singapore (MAS) and administered by the Singapore Exchange (SGX), the initiative will kick in from Feb 14 and cease in 2022.

To support the fund-raising needs of companies when they choose to list on the SGX, a listing grant will be given out to eligible companies - including foreign enterprises but excluding real estate investment trusts (Reits) and business trusts. This will help defray costs such as legal and underwriting fees.

Eligible firms can get up to 20 per cent of the funds for their listing expenses up to a cap of \$200,000. Those in high-growth sectors with a minimum market capitalisation of \$300 million will enjoy a higher limit of \$500,000. Technology com-

panies with a \$300 million market cap will be able to use the grant to co-fund their expenses by 70 per cent, up to \$1 million.

In addition, a research talent development grant, primarily for listed small- and mid-cap enterprises, will fund 70 per cent of the salaries of fresh graduates hired as equity research analysts, and half of the salaries of re-employed and experienced analysts.

The MAS will earmark funds for research that supports the equity research ecosystem. This is particularly important as more and more small- and mid-cap companies get listed here, said head of research in equities at DBS Bank Janice Chua.

"There is a concern that the number of analysts in the industry is insufficient to keep pace in the expansion of the universe of listed companies," she said. "It may mean that many small- and mid-cap companies may not get the valuations they deserve due to a lack of coverage."

On average, there are more than 15 analysts covering each of the top 30 listed companies, while the next 200 companies have an average of between two and six analysts covering each stock. PricewaterhouseCoopers capital markets leader Tham Tuck Seng hopes Gems would spur research coverage that will generate higher investor interest in these listed companies.

The grant comes after a dismal



Finance Minister Heng Swee Keat launching the new Grant for Equity Market Singapore at a UBS conference yesterday. The grant supports the fund-raising needs of firms when they choose to list on the Singapore Exchange. PHOTO: UBS

performance for SGX initial public offerings (IPOs) last year, having raised around \$730 million with 15 IPOs - the second-worst showing since 2008. In 2017, \$4.7 billion was raised with 20 IPOs.

Strong competition from other regional exchanges for big listings and the volatile financial markets as

a result of the ongoing United States-China trade conflict contributed to the decline. Several big players, such as gaming company Razer, picked Hong Kong Stock Exchange as a listing venue in recent years.

With Gems, Allen and Gledhill partner Tan Tze Gay said issuers, which are also increasingly con-

cerned about listing costs, now have another reason to choose SGX.

On the grant's preference for tech firms, SGX head of equities and fixed income Chew Sutut said it will help accelerate the development of Singapore in the future economy.

OCBC investment research head Carmen Lee said: "While the Singa-

pore market is recognised as being well represented by Reits listed here, there are comparatively fewer high-growth or technology companies and (Gems) will be a catalyst to draw companies to consider the Singapore market."

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What the money will fund



LISTING

Co-funding of eligible listing expenses:

- **New technology*** - 70% of expenses, up to \$1m.
- **High-growth sectors**** - 20% of expenses, up to \$500,000.
- **All sectors** - 20% of expenses, up to \$200,000.



RESEARCH TALENT DEVELOPMENT

50% to 70% co-funding of salaries for equity research hires (fresh graduates and experienced professionals).



RESEARCH INITIATIVES

Crowd-source initiatives that will broaden and deepen Singapore's equity research ecosystem.

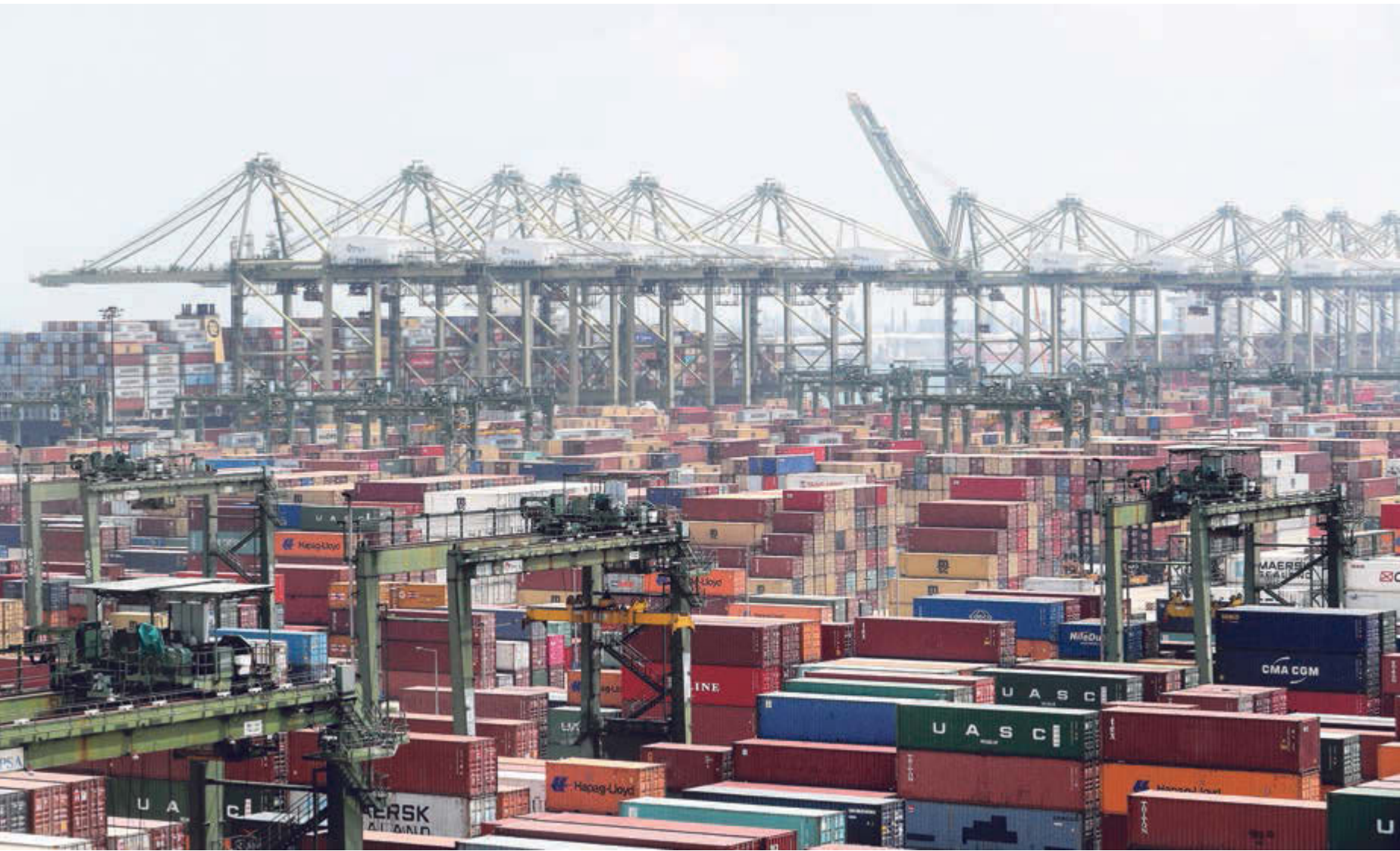
*The new technology sector includes fintech, consumer digital technologies, on-demand services as well as gaming services and peripherals.

Minimum market cap of \$300m.

**The high-growth sectors are the digital cluster, advanced manufacturing, hub services, logistics, urban solutions and infrastructure and healthcare.

Minimum market cap of \$300m.

Source: MONETARY AUTHORITY OF SINGAPORE STRAITS TIMES GRAPHICS



Singapore continues to be home to a diverse range of maritime businesses, with more than 5,000 enterprises here generating around 170,000 jobs. ST PHOTO: GAVIN FOO

S'pore remains top bunkering port in 2018

Number of containers handled up 8.7% to over 36 million TEUs

Cheryl Teh

Singapore retained its position as the world's leading bunkering port last year while also increasing the number of containers that passed through the docks. A total of 36.6 million 20ft equivalent units (TEUs), as containers are known, were handled here last year, up 8.7 per cent on 2017, while total cargo throughput remained stable at 630 million tonnes. And Singapore continues to be home to a diverse range of maritime businesses, with more than 5,000 enterprises here generating around 170,000 jobs in a sec-

tor that contributes 7 per cent of gross domestic product. The numbers were announced by Dr Lam Pin Min, Senior Minister of State for Transport and Health, at the Singapore Maritime Foundation New Year cocktail reception at Shangri-La Hotel. Dr Lam said that despite 2018 being a "year of uncertainty", with intensified global trade tensions and a fierce China-United States trade war, Singapore's maritime industry had not fared badly. He noted that the port continued to attract top maritime players, citing Greek global ship management Thenamaris Group, which opened its commercial ship management office here last year. Dr Lam also said maritime companies already in Singapore further entrenched their operations. China Cosco expanded into the lo-

\$4.5b

Growth target for the maritime sector's value-add in the Sea Transport Industry Transformation Map. launched the Sea Transport Industry Transformation Map (ITM) at this event a year ago." The ITM laid out initiatives to "catalyse innovation, drive productivity improvements, as well as enhance the skills of the maritime workforce". Its aim is to grow the maritime sector's value-add by \$4.5 billion and create more than 5,000 good jobs by 2025. The ITM has been successful thus far, Dr Lam said, lauding the achievements of companies that contributed to its progress. He thanked companies that worked to grow the breadth of Singapore's maritime service and to establish the country as a key financing node in Asia. Dr Lam also thanked companies that made a strong effort to work with technology and to foster innovation, such as Pier71, which last year organised the second Smart Port Challenge, where start-ups came up with innovative ideas to tackle real-life problems identified by the industry. He also expressed appreciation of businesses that invested in the maritime workforce, and organisations like the Maritime Singapore Connect Office for promoting greater awareness of maritime careers, connecting employers and job seekers.

S'pore online businesses most globalised of 15 markets polled

Singapore is home to the highest percentage of online businesses selling globally, according to a report published by technology firm Stripe that surveyed companies across 15 markets. But the Republic's online businesses also made up the highest proportion that said it is more difficult to run an international business now than it was five years ago, with government policies being the greatest obstacle. Singapore, alongside Hong Kong, had 88 per cent of online businesses selling to more than just their home market. Japan came in second at 86 per cent and France came next at 84 per cent. The study, which was conducted in partnership with research firm Viga, polled more than 9,000 founders and executives of online businesses across more than 10 industries. Online businesses were defined as companies that accept online payments and have online commerce as their primary source of revenue. Other markets in the study were China, the United Kingdom, the United States, Germany, South Africa, Italy, Australia, the Netherlands, Spain, Mexico and India. According to the report, more than half of Singapore businesses selling internationally had expanded to new countries within their first year. In general, the research found that over the last five years, firms that expanded internationally in their first year grew 141 percentage points more quickly in revenue and 15 percentage points more quickly in headcount than those that were slower to reach new markets. This correlation effect is likely amplified in smaller domestic markets such as Singapore, said Stripe. The rate of growth of online businesses also differed by verticals – software as a service and gaming businesses saw the fastest international growth, while hospitality and digital content companies grew the slowest. This is due to the ease of scaling a pure software business, compared to companies that touch physical infrastructure or require manual content creation. Despite being the most globalised, 61 per cent of Singapore respondents believe international operations are more challenging to handle now, compared to five years ago. About half of them said regulatory barriers were the biggest hurdle, followed by increasing protectionism (45 per cent) and government tariffs (45 per cent). Companies in other markets echoed this sentiment – 42 per cent said it is harder to do business globally today, with obstacles typically stemming from government policies. Inconsistent regulation and compliance rules across the world are also driving up operating costs for businesses. Globally, online businesses report spending between 5.9 per cent and 37.8 per cent of their net profit on regulation and compliance each year. In Singapore, close to 40 per cent of online businesses selling internationally spend between \$68,800 and \$137,800 each year on compliance and complex regulatory issues, while a further 34 per cent spend between \$137,800 and \$691,550. About 70 per cent also say this amount has been increasing. For the 30 per cent of Singapore businesses that find it easier to run an international business today, 75 per cent cite technology as the key reason, ahead of funding (42 per cent), physical infrastructure (59 per cent) and government support (45 per cent). While many regulations and taxes serve socially important purposes, they can also place limits on the extent to which the Internet can accelerate commerce across the globe, said the report. "Their impact falls disproportionately on small businesses who lack the sophisticated legal departments and other resources of their larger counterparts," it added. "Regulation... should encourage and foster new ideas and business models, but it should never be so cumbersome as to stop them from emerging in the first place."

Creative set to sell Super X-Fi tech in OEM market

Creative Technology said yesterday that it is ready to work with original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) to incorporate its Super X-Fi headphone technology into their products after getting a good response from some large players at last week's CES tech trade show. Creative chief executive Sim Wong Hoo had said last year that the plan has always been to sell Super X-Fi to hardware makers in order to reach a larger market, instead of focusing on the roll-out of its own products. The suite of Super X-Fi products that Creative manufactured and showcased at the Las Vegas show was meant to demonstrate to OEMs how the new technology could fit in various hardware, as he earlier told The Business Times. Now, after getting an overwhelming response from its OEM partners, Creative is ready to enter the OEM market immediately, Mr Sim said in a press release yesterday. He added: "In fact, many large OEM partners are pushing



After demos at last week's CES trade show, Creative's Super X-Fi snagged 10 awards from various tech review sites. PHOTO: LIANHE ZAOBAO

us to integrate Super X-Fi onto their products as soon as possible. "This will be an exciting new phase for us, as the OEM market is potentially hundreds of times larger than the market for Creative's Super X-Fi products." However, Mr Sim also previously said that the OEM market requires a whole new level of support and will take a longer time to generate meaningful revenue. Revenue per unit for OEM shipments can be expected to be lower than from sales of Super X-Fi products directly under the Creative brand. These are factors he has already considered, Mr Sim told BT. Spirits are high in the Creative team, which managed a surprise awards sweep at CES. As the trade show wrapped up last Friday after a frantic four days of Super X-Fi demo sessions, Creative's Super X-Fi headphone technology snagged a total of 10 awards from various tech review sites. This was the audio tech firm's best awards showing ever, it said.

Grab inks one-year rewards tie-up with CapitaLand

Ride-hailing company Grab is partnering property group CapitaLand for a one-year loyalty programme tie-up. Starting yesterday, Grab users in Singapore can convert their GrabRewards points into STARs (CapitaLand reward points). This gives them access to perks such as CapitaVouchers, on top of existing benefits from GrabRewards merchants. Merchants on the CapitaStar programme will have access to Grab's large user base, while CapitaStar members can enjoy Grab perks such as Grab promo codes. Grab will also work with CapitaLand to introduce GrabPay's cashless payment system to stores in its CapitaLand malls. Mr Gary Wong, head of GrabPay Singapore, said: "We look forward to having CapitaLand merchants join over 7,000 merchants in Singapore who accept GrabPay." In December, Grab announced a partnership with AsiaMalls to make GrabPay the preferred payment service provider across AsiaMalls' network of six heartland shopping malls, beginning from this month.

In general, the research found that over the last five years, firms that expanded internationally in their first year grew 141 percentage points more quickly in revenue and 15 percentage points more quickly in headcount than those that were slower to reach new markets.

TOP SPOTS

Sacred treasures in India

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COMMENTARY

A big step by CapitaLand and Temasek in play for global stakes

Today in THE BUSINESS TIMES

A publication of sph

ComfortDelGro CEO taking over helm of SBS Transit

Choo Yun Ting

ComfortDelGro group chief executive Yang Ban Seng will be taking over as SBS Transit's executive deputy chairman and chief executive from today.

SBS Transit, which is owned by ComfortDelGro, announced Mr Yang's appointment in a Singapore Exchange filing yesterday.

He replaces Mr Gan Juay Kiat, 61, who tendered his resignation last month over a "personal indiscretion".

Mr Yang, 62, has been the managing director and group CEO of ComfortDelGro, as well as deputy chairman of SBS Transit since May 1, 2017. He was recommended to the board by SBS Transit chairman Lim Jit Poh.

The SBS Transit board approved

the recommendation of Mr Yang's appointment on the strength of his experience and familiarity with SBS Transit's business operations.

In response to queries from The Straits Times, Mr Lim said Mr Yang has been supervising the work of the SBS Transit management in his capacity as managing director and group CEO.

Mr Yang is "well placed to fill in for the position of CEO", he added.



New SBS Transit CEO Yang Ban Seng (left) replaces Mr Gan Juay Kiat, who quit last month over a "personal indiscretion".

"The bus and rail heads will report directly to him and I have every confidence that the team will continue to focus on delivering good service to the communities we serve," said Mr Lim.

Before taking over as group CEO and managing director in 2017, Mr Yang was the chief executive of taxi business at ComfortDelGro, a post he had held since 2003.

Previously, he was in the public

service, working in the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Home Affairs.

Mr Gan, whose resignation was confirmed last month in a Singapore Exchange filing, was appointed SBS Transit CEO in 2010.

In the filing on Dec 28, SBS Transit said that Mr Gan would leave the company on March 27 this year.

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China exports shrink most in 2 years in Dec

Imports also down even as it posts biggest trade surplus with US on record last year

BEIJING • China's exports unexpectedly fell the most in two years last month, while imports also contracted, pointing to further weakness in the world's second-largest economy this year and deteriorating global demand.

Adding to policymakers' worries, data yesterday showed that China posted its biggest trade surplus with the United States on record last year, which could prompt President Donald Trump to turn up the heat on Beijing in their bitter trade dispute.

Softening demand in China is being felt around the world, with slowing sales of goods from iPhones to automobiles, prompting warnings

from the likes of Apple and from Jaguar Land Rover, which last week announced sweeping job cuts.

The dismal December trade readings suggest China's economy may have cooled faster than expected late in the year, despite a slew of growth-boosting measures in recent months, ranging from higher infrastructure spending to tax cuts.

Some analysts had speculated that Beijing may have to speed up and intensify its policy-easing and stimulus measures this year after factory activity shrank last month.

China's December exports unexpectedly fell 4.4 per cent from a year earlier, with demand in most

of its major markets weakening. Imports also saw a shock drop, falling 7.6 per cent in their biggest decline since July 2016.

Analysts had expected export growth to slow to 3 per cent, with imports up 5 per cent. "Today's data reflect an end to export front-loading and the start of payback effects, while the global slowdown could also weigh on China's exports," Nomura economists wrote in a note, referring to a surge in shipments to the US over much of last year as companies rushed to beat further tariffs.

"The export growth print also suggests that the recent strength of the yuan might be short-lived; Beijing will perhaps be more eager to strike a trade deal with the US; and policymakers will need to take more aggressive measures to stabilise GDP growth."



Workers prepare a container at Qingdao port in Shandong. China's December exports fell 4.4 per cent from a year earlier, with demand in most of its major markets weakening. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Net exports had already been a drag on China's economic growth in the first three-quarters of last year, after giving it a boost in 2017.

Asian shares and US stock market futures fell as the surprisingly weak Chinese data added to fears of weaker corporate profits and investment, while the yuan currency gave up some of its early gains.

China's politically sensitive surplus with the US widened by 17.2 per cent to US\$323.32 billion (S\$438 billion) last year, the highest on record going back to 2006, according to Reuters calculations based on Customs data.

However, Beijing's export data had been surprisingly resilient to tariffs for much of last year, possibly because companies ramped up shipments before broader and stiffer US duties went into effect.

As many market watchers predicted, that boost has faded in the last few months. China exports to the US fell 3.5 per cent last month, while its imports from the US were down 35.8 per cent for the month.

China's total global exports rose 9.9 per cent in 2018, its strongest performance in seven years, while

imports increased 15.8 per cent. But December's gloomy data, along with several months of falling factory orders, suggest a further weakening in its exports in the near term.

"A trade recession is likely, in our view," Mr Raymond Yeung, chief economist at ANZ, said in a note, predicting a period of export contraction similar to 2015-16. "The global electronics cycle remains the key driver of Chinese exports. A potential downturn in the sector poses the real risk to China's external outlook, even if China and the US reach a resolution on their trade dispute."

ING said a fall in electronic shipments could be related to foreign companies avoiding the use of China-made electronic components, adding that exports and imports of electronic parts and goods will likely shrink this year.

The higher tariffs China levied on US supplies also hit overall import growth. For all of 2018, soya beans, the second largest import from the US, fell for the first time since 2011.

Even if Washington and Beijing reach a trade deal in their current round of talks, it would be no panacea for China's slowing economy, analysts say. "The import slowdown is consistent with other signs that growth in China's domestic economy continued to weaken," said Mr Louis Kuijs, head of Asia economics at Oxford Economics.

Chinese policymakers are widely expected to roll out more support measures in the coming months if domestic and external conditions continue to deteriorate. REUTERS

Cheap and good: Chinese brands win fans in home market

BEIJING • Chinese brands are rapidly catching up with their foreign counterparts in the mainland with improving designs, reputation for reliability and wallet-friendly prices, market insiders said.

Software programmer Dong Fang, 28, would probably agree.

She recently installed a Xiaomi air purifier in her flat in Shanghai.

Although Xiaomi started out as a smartphone brand, it is now recognised as a major technology brand with a big presence in consumer electronics.

"There are many items from domestic brands I wouldn't mind buying for my new home," she said.

Tight budgets mean consumers will seek domestic brands that deliver value for money, she said.

"Unlike many other brands, the Xiaomi air purifier is designed in a minimalist style. It's not clumsy-looking nor an eyesore in the living room," she said.

"Many Chinese brands are catching up with foreign brands in terms of product design and functionality, which are top priorities for me."

When it comes to everyday items like tissue paper, snacks and health-care products, Ms Dong will also buy from Chinese retailers such as Yanxuan (the consumer goods branch of Internet company NetEase), minimalist Chinese homeware store Miniso and other local cosmetic brands.

She is among many Chinese consumers opting to buy local.

According to a recent report by Kantar Worldpanel, and Bain and Company, young Chinese brands are quickly picking up momentum and gaining market share from their foreign peers.

Among the 46 emerging Chinese



Customers at a Xiaomi shop in Beijing last November. Although Xiaomi started out as a smartphone brand, it is now recognised as a major technology brand with a big presence in consumer electronics, and is riding the wave of shoppers who buy local brands for their affordability and reliability. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

fast-moving consumer goods brands, over half are achieving an annual revenue of between 100 million yuan (S\$20 million) and 500 million yuan, and 67 per cent of them are growing at least twice as fast as the industry average.

"We have seen the emerging brands growing in China," Kantar China general manager Yu Jian said. "It means the sector was very unique and attractive, with potential challenges ahead if you want to win the market."

Yanxuan, which started with only 30 products three years ago but has

\$20 million-\$100 million

More than half of the 46 emerging Chinese fast-moving consumer goods brands are achieving annual revenue of these figures.

20,000 today, explained the edge in being a Chinese brand.

"Compared with our foreign counterparts, we know more about the country's consumption upgrades, and the conflict between the insufficient supply and the demand for high-quality products," said a spokesman for NetEase.

"We work directly with the manufacturers, thus the supply chain is shorter and the costs are lower.

"Many Internet-related companies such as Taobao, JD and Xiaomi have done a similar thing after Yanxuan proved to be a market success."

He said it does not mean that Chinese brands are squeezing foreign counterparts out of the market.

Instead, they are helping to create a better business environment with healthy competition.

Prophet, another global consultancy, also found that some global brands have been losing consumer loyalty.

According to its report in October, just three of the top 10 brands favoured by consumers were foreign-owned, while seven were Chinese brands. CHINA DAILY/ ASIA NEWS NETWORK

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NOTICES

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- ★ Gross Floor Area: Approx. 180,363 sqft
- ★ URA Master Plan (2014): Business 2
- ★ Tenure: JTC 30 + 30 years from April 1996
- ★ Corporate building, close to amenities
- ★ High ceiling equipped with ASRS systems
- ★ Good loading and unloading facilities

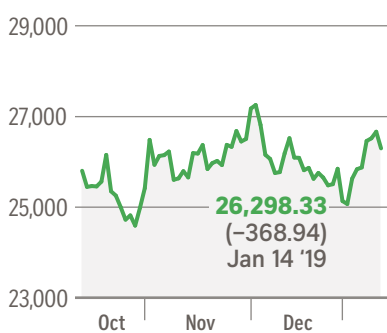
Brenda Ong 9616 3336
Salesperson Reg. No. R020642

Jonathan Tan 8113 9192
Salesperson Reg. No. R020194

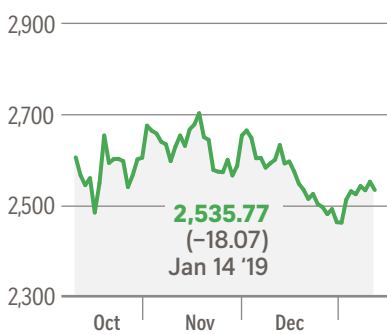
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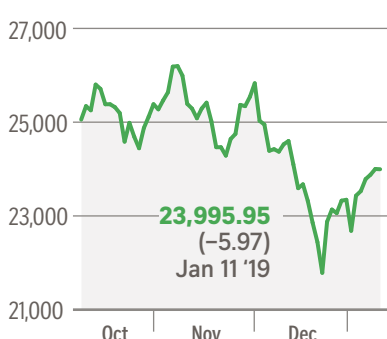
Shanghai Comp



Nikkei 225



Dow Jones



BullsAndBears

Asian bourses shaken by falling China exports

Unexpected drop in Dec mars optimism over US-China talks, ends 6-day STI rally

Leila Lai

Local shares snapped a six-day winning streak yesterday on strong signs that the Chinese economy is slowing.

The pain was felt elsewhere as well, with markets across the region declining on data showing that China's exports shrank 4.4 per cent last month from a year earlier, the largest drop in two years. Imports fell 7.6 per cent, the most since July 2016.

The unexpected contraction overshadowed market optimism from last week's trade talks between Washington and Beijing.

Stock markets in South-east Asia were particularly hard hit by the news as China is the region's largest trading partner.

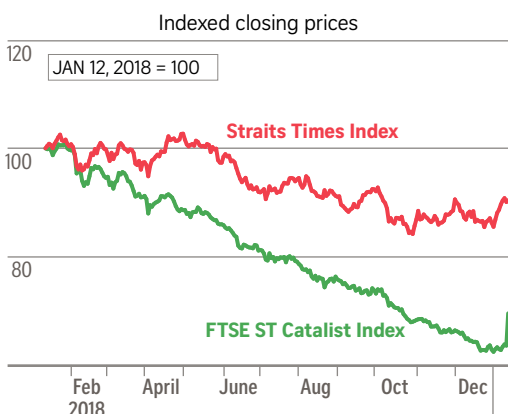
The Straits Times Index (STI) started the day strongly with a momentary spike above 3,200 points but plunged shortly after and spent the rest of the day trending downwards to close at 3,173.46, down 25.19 points or 0.79 per cent.

The decline ended a six-day winning streak that saw the STI climb nearly 140 points from a low of 3,012.88. About 1.28 billion shares worth \$727.42 million changed hands, with losers beating gainers 242 to 142.

All but seven STI constituents

Straits Times Index

Jan 14, 2019
3,173.46 ↓
-25.19 (-0.79%)
Current streak
1 day
Day high
3,205.72
Day low
3,173.46
52-week high
3,615.28 (May 2, 2018)
52-week low
2,966.45 (Oct 30, 2018)

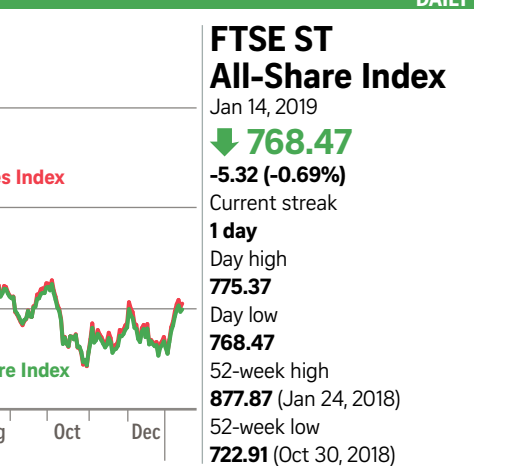


FTSE ST Catalyst Index

Jan 14, 2019
309.30 ↓
-1.14 (-0.37%)
Current streak
1 day
Day high
311.34
Day low
307.20
52-week high
490.47 (Jan 29, 2018)
52-week low
303.76 (Jan 3, 2019)

FTSE ST All-Share Index

Jan 14, 2019
768.47 ↓
-5.32 (-0.69%)
Current streak
1 day
Day high
775.37
Day low
768.47
52-week high
877.87 (Jan 24, 2018)
52-week low
722.91 (Oct 30, 2018)



ended the day in the red, with financials and industrials the biggest drags on the index. OCBC Bank gave up 1.29 per cent to \$11.50, while DBS lost 0.85 per cent to \$24.57.

Industrials mostly ended lower as well, except for ST Engineering,

which managed a 0.28 per cent gain to \$3.58.

The only other STI counter to end in the black was ThaiBev, up 2.9 per cent to 70 cents on trade of 60.1 million shares.

Bloomberg noted yesterday that

the counter was likely to move on news that its rival, Anheuser-Busch InBev, is considering an initial public offering (IPO) of its Asian operations. Exotix Capital analyst Nirgunan Tiruchelvam told Bloomberg that the rumoured IPO would show ThaiBev and its subsidiary Sabeco to be "deeply undervalued".

Four of the five STI counters that stayed unchanged were under trading halts related to a \$11 billion deal between CapitaLand and Ascendas-Singbridge to create Asia's largest diversified real estate group. They were Ascendas Real Estate Investment Trust (Reit), CapitaLand Commercial Trust, CapitaLand, and CapitaLand Mall Trust.

Best World International gained 4.5 per cent to \$2.76 on news that it is investing in A*Star spin-off Celligenics. It plans to invest around \$5.63 million for a 12.5 per cent stake in the biomedical start-up.

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Euro-area production slump adds to gloomy economic outlook

FRANKFURT • Industrial output in the euro area last November fell the most in almost three years, raising questions over the economy's ability to regain momentum after a broad-based slowdown.

Production dropped 1.7 per cent in November, more than economists predicted, underlining the impact from a range of temporary and structural factors – from dry weather to softer global demand.

The decline was led by a 2.3 per cent drop in capital goods, though output was weaker across all product groups.

The largest slump in overall production was recorded in Ireland.

The data comes after the European Central Bank stopped adding stimulus for the region's economy after nearly four years of bond buying.

Governing council member Francois Villeroy de Galhau said last week that officials should wait until the spring before taking new policy steps amid economic weakness and a fragile international outlook. BLOOMBERG

The decline was led by a 2.3 per cent drop in capital goods, though output was weaker across all product groups.

Straits Times Index stocks

52-WEEK HIGH	52-WEEK LOW	COMPANY	CURRENCY LAST TRADED SALE	+OR-	'VOL '000	GROSS YIELD%	P/BV
286	245	Ascendas Reit	268	halt	-	6	1.3
197	161	CapitaCom Trust	182	halt	-	4.8	1
388	298	CapitaLand	327	halt	-	3.7	0.7
238	195	CapitaMall Trust	232	halt	-	4.8	1
1360	780	CityDev	871	-19	1685	2.1	0.8
251	196	ComfortDelGro	214	-2	6378	4.9	1.8
3128	2265	DBS Grp	2457	-21	2289	5.8	1.4
968	767	DairyFarm USD	US928	unch	235	2.3	-
141	85.5	Genting Sing	103	-1	17515	3.4	1.6
39	22.5	Golden Agri-Res	25.5	-0.5	6082	3.2	0.6
42	23	HPH Trust USD	US25	-1	4555	10.5	0.4
744	588	HongkongLand USD	US691	-1	1637	2.9	0.3
6974	5580	JMH USD	US6797	-13	232	2.4	0.7
4149	3155	JSH USD	US3690	-110	253	0.9	0.4
4105	2766	Jardine C&C	3626	-55	480	3.2	1.8
892	567	Keppel Corp	614	-11	2239	3.6	1
1404	1036	OCBC Bank	1150	-15	2904	3.2	1.2
585	455	SATS	488	-3	932	3.7	3.4
150	67.2	SGX	726	-3	114	4.1	8.8
1184	914	SIA	966	-5	883	4.1	0.8
292	231	SPH	247	-2	2656	5.3	1.1
370	319	ST Engineering	358	+1	1643	4.2	5.2
260	243	Sembcorp Ind	263	-11	4867	1.9	0.7
365	283	Singtel	300	-5	20061	6.8	1.7
94	57.5	ThaiBev	70	cd	60064	0.9	3.4
3037	2380	UOB	2600	-9	2569	3.8	1.3
938	591	UOL	653	-10	964	2.7	0.6
2965	1320	Venture Corp	1480	-24	870	4.1	1.9
331	297	Wilmar Intl	322	-2	2987	3.1	0.9
166	84	YZJ Shipbldg SGD	128	-2	13444	3.5	0.9

FTSE ST Large & Mid-Cap Index stocks

52-WEEK HIGH	52-WEEK LOW	COMPANY	CURRENCY LAST TRADED SALE	+OR-	'VOL '000	GROSS YIELD%	P/BV
286	245	Ascendas Reit	268	halt	-	6	1.3
127	105	Ascott Reit	113	halt	-	6.3	0.9
77	59	Bumitama Agri	68	unch	73	11	1.6
185	143	CDL H Trust	154	unch	3118	-	1
197	161	CapitaCom Trust	182	halt	-	4.8	1
388	298	CapitaLand	327	halt	-	3.7	0.7
238	195	CapitaMall Trust	232	halt	-	4.8	1
169	133	CapitaStar China Tr	144	halt	-	7	0.9
1360	780	CityDev	871	-19	1685	2.1	0.8
251	196	ComfortDelGro	214	-2	6378	4.9	1.8
3128	2265	DBS Grp	2457	-21	2289	5.8	1.4
968	767	DairyFarm USD	US928	unch	235	2.3	-
78	59	Far East H Trust	62	-1	2878	-	0.7
197	150	First Resources	170	unch	597	4	2.2
236	211	Fraser's Cpt Tr	223	-2	715	5.4	1.1
117	101	Fraser's L&I Tr	107	+1	2983	6.4	1.1
141	85.5	Genting Sing	103	-1	17515	3.4	1.6
39	22.5	Golden Agri-Res	25.5	-0.5	6082	3.2	0.6
234	167	GuocoLand Ltd	181	-2	268	3.9	0.5
42	23	HPH Trust USD	US25	-1	4555	10.5	0.4
744	588	JMH USD	US691	-1	1637	2.9	0.3
6974	5580	JMH USD	US6797	-13	232	2.4	0.7
4149	3155	JSH USD	US3690	-110	253	0.9	0.4
4105	2766	Jardine C&C	3626	-55	480	3.2	1.8
59	44.5	Keppel Infra Tr	51	+0.5	3086	7.3	1.8
892	567	Keppel Corp	614	-11	2239	3.6	1
133	108	Keppel Reit	116	unch	7082	4.9	0.8
215	151	Man Oriental USD	207	unch	2273	5.5	3.9
273	170	Mapletree Ind Tr	157	-3	141	1.6	1.4
172	152	Mapletree Com Tr	170	-1	2834	5.3	1.1
213	184	Mapletree Log Tr	197	-1	4278	6	1.3
138	118	Mapletree NAC Tr	132	-1	9435	5.8	1.2
128	107	Mapletree NAC Tr	117	unch	7388	6.4	0.9
835	73	NetLink NBN Tr	77	unch	1892	-	1
1404	1036	OCBC Bank	1150	-15	2904	3.2	1.2
215	136	OUÉ	147	-2	85	2	0.3
92.5	64.5	OUÉ H Trust	68.5	-0.5	765	-	0.9
250	157	Olam Intl	176	-1	124	4.3	0.9
60.8	28	Oxley	30.5	-1	3872	4.9	0.9
306	256	ParkwayLife Reit	271	+3	294	4.9	1.5
121	98	Raffles Medical	115	-1	1136	2	2.7
585	455	SATS	488	-3	932	3.7	3.4
850	672	SGX	726	-3	114	4.1	8.3
1184	914	SIA	966	-5	883	4.1	0.8
337	220	SIA Engineering	250	-2	392	5.2	1.9
292	231	SPH	247	-2	2656	5.3	1.1
107	98	SPHREIT	102	cd	706	5.4	1.1
370	319	ST Engineering	358	+1	1643	4.2	5.2
260	243	Sembcorp Ind	263	-11	4867	1.9	0.7
281	149	Sembcorp Marine	159	-4	2768	1.3	1.4
58	39	SilverLake Axis	41	unch	6353	7.3	6
147	88.5	SingPost	95	+0.5	3172	3.7	1.3
365	283	Singtel	300	-5	20061	6.8	1.7
299	158	StarHub	177	unch	828	9	5.4
78	63.5	StarhillGbl Reit	70	+1	3207	6.5	0.8
225	163	Suntec Reit	186	unch	6026	5.4	0.9
94	57.5	ThaiBev	70	cd	60064	0.9	3.4
10.2	3.7	Thomson Medical	7.8	ce	7616	-	2.8
3037	2380	UOB	2600	-9	2569	3.8	1.3
938	591	UOL	653	-10	964	2.7	0.6
2965	1320	Venture Corp	1480	-24	870	4.1	1.9
331	297	Wilmar Intl	322	-2	2987	3.1	0.9
244	183	Wing Tai	198	+1	330	4	0.5
166	84	YZJ Shipbldg SGD	128	-2	13444	3.5	0.9
191	116	Yanlord Land	129	-1	742	5.3	0.5

FTSE ST Small-Cap Index stocks

52-WEEK HIGH	52-WEEK LOW	COMPANY	LAST SALE	+OR-	'VOL '000	GROSS YIELD%	P/BV
145	129	AIMSAMP Cap Reit	138	+1	354	7.5	1
71	48	Accordia Golf Tr	55	unch	193	7	0.6
90.5	74	Ascendas-hTrust	80	halt	-	-	0.8
119	99	Ascendas-iTrust	105	halt	-	5.8	1.2
59	12.2	Asian Pay TV Tr	13.3	-0.1	1111	48.9	0.2
67	48	Banyan Tree	59	unch	536	1.7	0.8
279	115	Best World	276	+12	3681	1.5	9.9
85.5	76	Boustead	80	unch	10	3.8	1.2
126	79.5	BreadTalk	87.5	unch	59	8	2.3
658	521	Bukit Sembawang	567	unch	94	3.2	1.2
88.5	65.5	Cache Log Trust	72.5	-0.5	1443	10	1
56	39.5	Centurion	40.5	unch	432	6.2	0.7
169	104	China Aviation	113	-2	688	4	0.9
47.5	29.5	China Everbright	32	+0.5	75	1.5	0.6
165	90.5	China Sunshine	129	-4	577	23	1.4
107	64	Chip Eng Seng	70	-0.5	1600	5.7	0.6
53.5	31.5	Cosco	35.5	-1	2413	-	1.5
700	302	Delong	599	-2	13	-	0.6
28	17.5	Duty Free Intl	21	cd	126	8.8	1.3
79	67.5	EC World Reit	71	+1	210	8.5	0.8
59.5	47	ESR-REIT	54	unch	1837	7.1	0.9
142	92	First Reit	105	+1	299	8.2	1
155	134	Fraser's Com Tr	141	-1	877	6.8	0.9
82.5	66.5	Fraser's H Trust	71	unch	900	-	0.9
28	16.4	Geo Energy Res	18.7	-0.6	1153	5.3	1.1
91	70.5	HRnetGroup	79.5	+0.5	95	2.9	2.4
70	52	Health Mgt Intl	54	-1	100	0.6	5.2
279	73	Hi-P Intl	88.5	-2.5	2944	28.2	1.3
283	252	Hong Leong Fin	261	+1	109	5	0.6
82.5	71	IREIT Global	73.5	unch	57	8.1	1
42	18.3	Indofood Agri	20.5	-0.5	2092	-	0.2
79.5	43	Japfa	76.5	-1.5	1817	0.7	1.4
84.5	49	KSH	53	+1	63	4.2	0.9
86.9	53	Kep-KBS Reit USD	64	-1.5	431	-	0.5
148	128	Keppel DC Reit	139	unch	2743	5.1	1.4

Mr Howard Marks, co-chairman of Oaktree Capital Management with a reputation for being a bargain hunter, said he thinks it is better to invest today than it was on Oct 1 and there is optimism in market prices with the approach of the tail end of a long bull market. ST FILE PHOTO



Investors should be more defensive: Expert

Be wary when people accept a lot of risk and feel good about risk, says star investor Howard Marks

Despite recent volatility, there is not much distress yet in the financial market, said American celebrity investor Howard Marks. “Most of the quantitative evidence is modest – not optimistic, but not too bad,” he added. “My general position is that when people are accepting a lot of risk and feeling good about risk, that makes the market a risky place and we should apply caution.” Mr Marks, the Los Angeles-based co-chairman of Oaktree Capital Management with a reputation for being a bargain hunter, was in town for the Bank of Singapore’s Global Outlook 2019 forum yesterday. “Things are beginning to go the

way of the distressed investor or the value investor; things are not as expensive as they were six months ago,” he told some 1,200 attendees, mostly Bank of Singapore clients, while citing factors such as the impact of rising interest rates on investors’ risk tolerance and company debt. “But there’s not much distress there yet.” Mr Marks noted that “with interest rates extremely low for the last 10 years, people have had to take on increasing risk in order to access the kinds of returns that they wanted”. Still, optimism has not been too high, he said. “There have been pockets of optimism – the FAANG stocks, some EM (emerging market) debt from time to time, and certainly Bitcoin were all indicative of the presence of optimism in the market – but I don’t think to a great extent.” The term “FAANG” refers to

popular American technology counters Facebook, Apple, Amazon, Netflix and Google parent Alphabet. Mr Marks acknowledged that investors should be asking themselves what their stance is on risk. “My answer – pretty strongly held, although not dramatically so – is that you should be more defensive than usual, not more aggressive,” he said. “We should worry more about losing money than about missing out.” While risk levels might have been elevated about half a year ago, “you could argue that the correction of the fourth-quarter let a little steam off... and has permitted things to stabilise and smooth out”, he said. “I think it’s better to invest today than it was on Oct 1. I still think there is optimism in market prices. I still think that we are late in the economic cycle, approaching the tail end of a long bull market.” He added, to a question on

NOT AS COSTLY

Things are beginning to go the way of the distressed investor or the value investor; things are not as expensive as they were six months ago. But there’s not much distress there yet.



MR HOWARD MARKS, on the impact of rising interest rates on risk tolerance.

WORRY ABOUT LOSING MONEY

My answer is that you should be more defensive than usual, not more aggressive. We should worry more about losing money than about missing out.



MR MARKS, on getting investors to ask themselves what their stance is on risk.

whether the global growth cycle could have chugged on for longer if not for US President Donald Trump’s hawkish attitude towards trade with China: “I think that the trade war and the adverse market to it was only one of the factors that contributed to the fourth-quarter downturn. Things had gone so well for so long, we were getting good for a downturn.” Mr Marks added: “It can be argued that we are in the bold, innovative, early part of the cycle. The question is how close we are to the silly, imitative part.” As for the US Federal Reserve’s possible interest rate policy this year, he predicted: “When there’s too much money chasing deals, then it’s hard to get a good deal. Prices are bid up, risks are elevated and structure is weakened by the onslaught of capital. “We have been watching over the last couple of years as the Fed has tried to rein that in by raising the cost of capital. There may be a hiatus in that. “Still, I think, the interest rates are biased towards the upside and will be going higher. It makes life tougher for debtors and creates investment opportunities away from the stock market. “My own bias is that rates will not rise as rapidly in the next two years as they did in the last two, but, in general, they will continue to rise.”

Qatar sovereign wealth fund to boost US portfolio to \$61b

DOHA • Qatar Investment Authority (QIA) aims to raise its US investments to US\$45 billion (\$61 billion) in the next two years as it rebalances its asset portfolio away from Europe, its chief executive has said. The sovereign wealth fund has built up a huge European portfolio through stakes in companies that include Deutsche Bank, Credit Suisse and London Stock Exchange. QIA has about US\$30 billion invested in the US, Mansour Ibrahim al-Mahmoud said on Sunday. “We are talking about US\$45 billion for the US market... We are on track for this over the next two years.” Mr Mahmoud’s predecessor, Sheikh Abdullah bin Mohamed bin Saud al-Thani, in 2015 committed to invest US\$45 billion in the US over a five-year period. “Our objec-

tive is to balance our portfolio... Currently we have a little bit of concentration in Europe and having this allocation towards the US market is to balance the portfolio,” he said. In the US, QIA was looking at fundamental sectors, including real estate, technology and bourses, he said. In one such deal, QIA and hedge fund Elliott Management in December 2017 took Gigamon, the US networking software company, private for US\$1.6 billion. Mr Mahmoud was speaking as US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo visited Qatar on a tour of the region. Qatar is at loggerheads with Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Egypt, which have cut off diplomatic and transport ties with Doha, accusing it of backing terrorism and cosyng up to Iran.

Qatar denies supporting terrorism and its government is seeking to use the sanctions enforced by its neighbours as an opportunity to develop its own industry and its relations with other countries. The value of Qatar’s trade with the US has doubled in 10 years, Trade Minister Ali al-Kuwairi said at the US-Qatar Strategic Dialogue conference over the weekend. He said the US tops the list of exporters to the Gulf nation. Mr Kuwairi said bilateral trade volume reached US\$6 billion in the period from January to October last year. He did not give the equivalent figure for the previous year but this would be higher than the value for all of 2017, which was about US\$4.3 billion in bilateral trade, according to the US Census Bureau. REUTERS

Interbank currency rates

Currencies	Against \$	Against US\$	Jan 14
	Bid	Offer	
\$S/US\$ to one unit of foreign currency:			
Australian dollar	0.9728	0.9733	0.7196
Canadian dollar	1.0191	1.0198	0.7530
Euro	1.5536	1.5547	1.1476
NZ dollar	0.9204	0.9215	0.6799
Sterling pound	1.7381	1.7392	1.2839
US dollar	1.3538	1.3543	-
\$S/US\$ to 100 units of foreign currency:			
Chinese renminbi	20.0124	20.0240	14.7824
Danish kroner	20.8142	20.8251	15.3747
Hong Kong dollar	17.26	17.27	12.7512
Indian Rupee	191	191	1.4124
Indonesian rupiah	0.0096	0.0096	0.0071
Japanese yen	12522	12531	0.9250
Korean won	0.1205	0.1207	0.0890
Malaysian ringgit	3.300	3.305	24.3784
New Taiwan dollar	4.3846	4.3905	32.388
Norwegian krone	15.8213	15.8327	11.6866
Philippine peso	2.5895	2.5915	1.9128
Saudi riyal	36.0888	36.1060	26.6574
Swedish krona	15.1312	15.1418	11.768
Swiss franc	137.6792	137.7861	101.6984
Thai baht	4.2346	4.2375	3.1279

Government securities

Period	Issue code	Coupon rate (%)	Maturity	Close Bid	High	Day's Low
2-Year	NY05100N	3.250%	01-Sep-20	102.17	102.18	102.18
5-Year	NX13100H	2.750%	01-Jul-23	103.41	103.47	103.41
10-Year	NX18100A	2.625%	01-May-28	103.98	0.00	0.00
15-Year	NZ13100V	3.375%	01-Sep-33	112.05	112.25	112.08
20-Year	N216100X	2.250%	01-Aug-36	97.24	97.40	97.40
30-Year	NA16100H	2.750%	01-Mar-46	103.84	104.15	104.10

Note: Based on latest issue

Source: Monetary Authority of Singapore

MSCI INDICES

Jan 11	Index	% dy	% yr
World Preliminary	1489.9	-0.1	3.4
EAPE Preliminary	1039.0	0.1	3.1
Europe Preliminary	1450.5	-0.1	3.3
Australia	1163.7	-0.3	2.0
Austria Preliminary	525.8	-1.1	5.6
Belgium Preliminary	971.9	1.5	6.2
Canada Preliminary	1906.2	0.1	4.1
Denmark Preliminary	7735.4	-0.1	4.4
Finland Preliminary	687.5	-0.2	5.3
France Preliminary	1736.4	-0.5	1.3
Germany Preliminary	873.5	-0.3	3.5
Greece Preliminary	46.5	1.0	7.3
India	1252.3	-0.3	-0.8
Indonesia	7306.8	0.5	3.3
Ireland Preliminary	188.7	0.1	5.3
Israel Preliminary	244.2	0.1	5.9
Italy Preliminary	655.2	0.0	5.3
Japan	917.7	0.7	2.7
Korea	616.2	0.7	2.0
Malaysia	581.9	0.4	0.0
Netherlands Preliminary	1489.1	0.3	2.1
New Zealand	136.0	0.2	2.5
Norway Preliminary	2907.9	-0.1	4.4
Pakistan	382.9	0.0	7.3
Philippines	1342.3	-1.1	6.4
Portugal Preliminary	83.6	0.8	3.5
Singapore	1667.9	0.6	4.6
Singapore Free	358.6	0.6	4.6

Source: MSCI

தமிழ் மூலம்

Lost in translation?

Tamil Murasu provides error-free translation from English to Tamil

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THE STRAITS TIMES SINGAPOREAN OF THE YEAR 2018
PRESENTED BY UBS

The Straits Times Singaporean of the Year award, organised in partnership with UBS for the fourth year running, seeks to honour the positive impact made by Singaporeans and celebrate the triumph of the human spirit

Douglas Yeo and Poh Kok Wee
Veteran diver Douglas Yeo, 50, risked his life to help with the evacuation of the last five Thai boys who were trapped in a cave. Age also did not deter Poh Kok Wee, 57, from helping scout for alternative cave entrances to reach the boys.

FINALIST

Read about the other finalists at str.sg/soty2018 and tell us who should be the Singaporean of the Year 2018 by Jan 15, 6pm

Cast your vote now at str.sg/soty18vote
Terms and conditions apply

OBITUARIES

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CHIA TECK LIANG (谢德亮)

Age: 80

Passed away peacefully on 14 January 2019.

Dearly missed and fondly remembered by all loved ones.

Wife: Lee Soo Chin

Sons:
Chia Lee Meng Raymond PBM
Chia Lee Cheow Nelson

Daughters:
Chia Shirley
Chia Alice

Godson:
Lee Yan Kheng

Goddaughter:
Koh Kwee Choo

God Grandsons:
Lee Ryan
Lee Russell
Lim Anthony

Daughters-in-law:
Lim Sock Joo Judy
Hung Maggie

Son-in-law:
Tay Choon Seng Jeffrey

Goddaughter-in-law:
Sng Charmaine

Godson-in-law:
Lim Kheng Boon

God Granddaughters:
Lee Rachel
Lim Tiffany

Grandsons:
Chia Benjamin
Chia Sean
Tay Jonathan

Granddaughters:
Chia Lynn
Chia Gwen
Chia Joie
Tay Abigail

God Grandson-in-law:
Wong Andy

All relatives and friends.

Wake is held at 91 Tampines Link, Singapore Funeral Parlour (Tulip Room), S'pore 528746.

Cortege will leave on 18 January 2019, Friday at 10.40am for Mandai Cremation Hall 3 for cremation at 11.40am.

The family requests no wreaths/scrolls, all donations will be given to charity.

"Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me
all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in
the house of the Lord forever." Psalm 23:6



Margaret Weller née Pharamond

Age: 94

Was called home to the Lord on 13 January 2019.
Lovingly missed and always treasured by:

Husband: Aloysius Weller (deceased)

Children:
Gerard Weller
Ivan Weller
Geraldine Weller

Daughter-in-law:
Marcellena Albuquerque

Grandchildren:
Richard Weller
Melanie Weller

Grandchildren-in-law:
Dominique Mosbergen
Aaron Rajadurai

Caregiver: Analyn Cuaresma Chua

Siblings, nephews, nieces, relatives & friends.

Wake at The Oratory Nativity Parish, Prayer Room 2,
100 Hougang Avenue 8, Singapore 538790.

Nightly prayers will be held at 8.00pm.

Funeral Mass on Thursday 17 January 2019
at the Church of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary
at 10.45am, thereafter cortege leaves for Mandai
Crematorium Hall 3 for cremation at 12.20pm.

"Come, you whom my Father has blessed,
inherit the kingdom prepared for you." Matthew 25:34



Annie Wong York Ai

Age: 83

Was called home to be with the Lord on 13 January 2019.
Dearly missed and fondly remembered by loved ones.

Brothers:
Matthew Wong
Peter Wong
Paul Wong
Michael Wong
David Wong

Sisters-in-law:
Thory Wong
Esther Wong
Illya Wong
Adeline Wong
Molly Wong

Sisters:
Helen Wong
Celia Wong

Brothers-in-law:
William Chow
Chris Ng

Nephews, nieces, all relatives and friends.

Wake at Church of St Mary of the Angels, La Verna Chapel,
5 Bukit Batok East Avenue 2, Singapore 659918.

Nightly prayers will be held at 8.30 pm.

Cortege leaves on Thursday 17 January 2019 at 9.45 am
for Funeral Mass at Church of the Holy Cross,
450 Clementi Avenue 1, Singapore 129955 at 10.30 am,
thereafter to Mandai Crematorium Hall 4
for cremation at 12.05 pm.

13th Anniversary



STEVEN LIM CHIN GUAN

Departed on 15 January 2006

Not just today but every day,
We remember the times we shared

Deeply missed by:

Wife : Annie Yap

Daughters : Trudy & Josephine

Sons-in-law : David & Adrian

Grandchildren : Mitchell & Janene
Aurielle & Emmersen

The Family of the late



LTC (Ret.) Giles Miranda

called home to the Lord on 18 December 2018

wish to convey our sincere thanks and appreciation
to Rev. Fr. Kenny Tan, Rev. Fr. Eugene Vaz,
relatives and friends for their prayers, presence
and condolences during our recent bereavement.

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and Respect for All



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DOCUMENTS NEEDED: Photograph (300 dpi), Original Death Certificate, Advertiser's IC. PAYMENT BY Cash, credit card, NETS, cheque. No cash payment for bookings on weekdays after 5.30pm and on weekends.

*With Deepest Sympathy and Heartfelt Condolences to
our Group Chief Executive Officer*

Chia Lee Meng Raymond PBM

on the demise of his beloved father



Chia Teck Liang

Departed on 14 January 2019

From :



集永成集團
CHIP ENG SENG GROUP

Board of Directors, Management and Staff



OBITUARIES

FOR BOOKINGS AND ENQUIRIES
1800-289-9988 or 6319-5192

SATNAM SRI WAHEGURU



ARTI GOPE RAMCHAND

Age: 67

Passed away peacefully on Sunday, 13 January 2019
Dearly missed and fondly remembered by loved ones:

Husband: Gope Ramchand

Children: Kamlesh & Payal Ramchand

Grandchildren: Tanya, Pia & Divina

Dedicated Caregiver: Nur

Favourite pets: Messi & Joey

Special thanks to:

Prof Tan Bien Soo, Prof Tan Seck Guan, Prof Chan Choong Meng,
Prof Howe Tet Sen, Dr Gordon Ku, Dr Ho Chee Khun
and all the Staff of SGH and Asia Renalcare Mt Elizabeth
for their compassion and care in looking after Arti over the years.

Prayers (Kirtan / Marko)

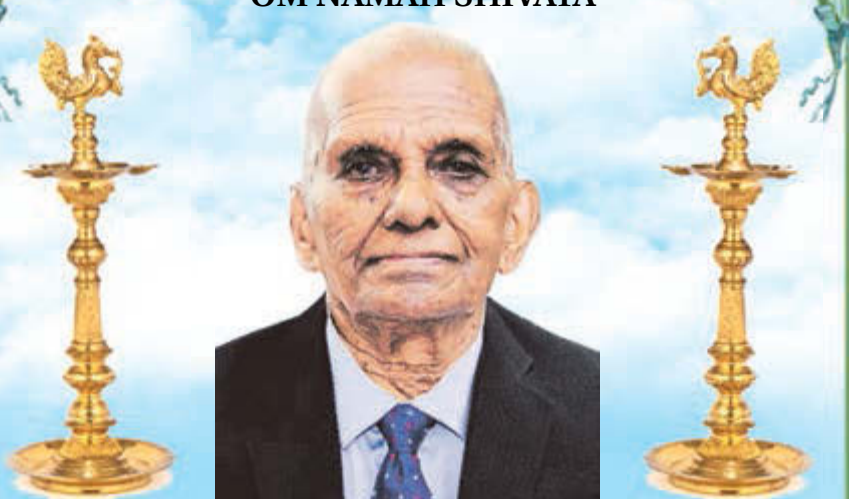
Will be held on Wednesday, 16 January 2019 at
Katong Gurdwara, 17 Wilkinson Road, S(435573) from 5pm to 6pm

For details contact: 97413565 (Kamlesh), 90043799 (Payal)

NO WREATHS PLEASE

Please treat this as a personal invitation

OM NAMAH SHIVAYA



**Meyappaathevar
Kolandai Vayloo**

Age: 103

Passed away peacefully on 13 January 2019.

Dearly missed and fondly remembered by loved ones.

Wife: Sinnasamy Thevar Annakodi (deceased)

Sons:

K.V. Miyapan

K.V. Nadarajan

K.V. Velu

Daughters:

K. Rajambal

K. Yasothai

K. Maheswari

K. Lalithal

Daughters-in-law:

Vasanth

Josephine

Vellermathi

Sons-in-law:

Sathivelu

Manimaran

Puniammoorthy (deceased)

**Grandchildren and Spouses, Great-Grandchildren and Spouses,
Great-Great-Grandchildren, all Relatives and Friends.**

Appa is resting at 4 Cashew Terrace, Singapore 679542.

Cortege leaves on Tuesday 15 January 2019 at 5.00pm
for Mandai Crematorium Hall 1 for cremation at 6.30pm.

Tel: 9182 0595 / 9628 9123 / 9733 7467

"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race,
I have kept the faith." Timothy 4 : 7



FRANKLIN LEBESTOR PEREIRA

Age: 90

was called home to be with the Lord on 13 January 2019,
dearly missed by loved ones.

Wife: Hazel Rose

Brother: Theobald & Wife Susan
and all his deceased brothers & sisters and in-laws.

Children:

Millicent

Cynthia

Maureen

Fr. John Bosco

Caroline

Spouses:

Jude

Powlin

Anthony

Anselm

Grandchildren:

Aaron, Jerome, Bipin, Bindu, Bobby, Natasha,
Michelle, Aylwin, Bryan, Mitchell,
Rebecca and Franchesca.

Care-giver: Susana Castillo

**All the spouses of the grandchildren and all the
great-grandchildren, cousins, nieces, nephews,
relatives and friends.**

Wake is held at

**Church of the Holy Spirit,
248 Upp. Thomson Rd, Singapore 574371.**

**Funeral mass on Friday, 18 January 2019 at
10.45am and thereafter for Mandai
Crematorium Hall 2 for cremation at 1pm.**

Obituaries

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News Centre, 1000 Toa Payoh North

Mondays – Fridays:

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Saturdays, Sundays & Public Holidays:

12.30pm to 9.30pm

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To help us process your announcement quickly, please prepare:

- Deceased photo (300 dpi for digital photo)
- Original Death Certificate
- Identity Card of person placing the announcement
- Details to be included in the announcement, e.g. list of family names, information on wake and funeral

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Cash, credit card, NETS or cheque

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on weekdays after 5.30pm and on weekends.

Enquiries

1800-289-9988 or 6319-5192

ST Classifieds

AL-FATHAH



**ALLAHYARHAMHA
HJH FATIMAH BINTE
SHAUKAT ALI
(Mrs Eusope)**

Age: 71

Departed on 9.1.2019
We, the family of the late, wish to express our
heartfelt thanks and appreciation to relatives
and friends, for their
kind attendance and
condolences.
May Allah bless her soul.
Amin.

With Deepest Sympathy &
Heartfelt Condolences to
The Family of The Late



KHAIRUDIN BIN ABU BAKAR
Departed on 13 Jan 2019

From:

**The Commissioner &
Staff of Immigration &
Checkpoints Authority**

'OM SHANTI'



**VILAS KANTILAL
B SHAH**
Departed: 15/1/95

Your memory lingers,
Sweetly tender, fond & true.
There is not a day,
dear mother,
That we do not think of you.
**Hareesh/ Ashvin/
Bhavesh & Pariwar**

25TH ANNIVERSARY In Loving Memory Of



S. VEERASINGAM
Departed: 15 January 1994

We often think of bygone days
When we were together;
The family chain is broken
But memories live forever.

**Sadly missed by
Children, In-Laws, Grandchildren
and Great-Grandchildren**



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with loved ones & friends

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SPORT



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BOWLER TO 2ND PLACE
IN HELSINKI **C10**



Marcus Rashford scoring the only goal of the match (left) on Sunday, after receiving a pin-point pass from Paul Pogba (below), who has been enjoying a rich vein of form under United's interim coach Ole Gunnar Solskjaer. PHOTO: REUTERS, EPA-EFE

HONEYMOON CONTINUES

Given the freedom to roam, Red Devils win their sixth straight match under Solskjaer

LONDON • Paul Pogba took another swipe at Jose Mourinho on Sunday by thanking Ole Gunnar Solskjaer for giving him the attacking freedom to enjoy his football again. The France midfielder created the only goal of the game for Marcus Rashford with a wonderful pass as Manchester United extended their remarkable run under their interim manager with a 1-0 Premier League away win over Tottenham. Solskjaer now has six straight wins – the best start of any United manager – and their turnaround since Mourinho's firing has coincided with a series of match-winning displays from Pogba, who has

been given a licence to roam “like Frank Lampard”. Declaring after their Spurs victory he was now “always smiling” as “it was a pleasure to play again”, he told reporters: “Before the coach arrived, I was in the shadows, on the bench, and I accepted that. “I am enjoying playing my football now. I like to be more attacking, I had to defend too much before and that is not my best attribute. This is my position. The manager tells me to get into the box and score goals. “Everything comes when you are free and you have the trust of the manager and the players, so they

make it easier for me as well. “I know (Nemanja) Matic is there. I know we can press high and, when we get the ball, I can shoot, I can pass and that's what we have been doing since the new manager came in. I have security behind me and have freedom to go, so it helps me.” And if Wembley was an audition for the permanent United role, Solskjaer is surely closer to a callback at the Theatre of Dreams after impressing against Mauricio Pochettino, the man widely tipped as the front runner. He demonstrated his ability to do the job long term and showed there is science behind the smiles, displaying acuity by exploiting Spurs' vulnerability out wide when they start with a midfield diamond. Pogba lauded Solskjaer's tactics, insisting he deserved equal credit



6 Consecutive wins Ole Gunnar Solskjaer has guided Manchester United to, the best of any new manager at the helm of the 20-time English champions.

for the pass that teed up Rashford, saying: “It's a great ball but we've been training for this all week because we knew this was the weakness of Tottenham. “When they attack one side, they get very high and we need to attack on the opposite side. We knew we could hurt them in this way and we worked on it.” Pochettino abandoned the shape in the second half, switching to a 4-2-3-1, and Solskjaer could not check the shift in momentum, with only the excellence of David de Gea preventing Spurs from not just leveling but winning. The Spain No. 1, who later sounded a warning to the rest of the league that they were now seeing

“the real United”, made 11 saves after the break – more than any other goalkeeper has made in 90 minutes this term – to deny Spurs, and Solskjaer felt he could be the greatest to put on gloves at Old Trafford. He said: “We've had some great 'keepers at this club and he's challenging both Edwin (van der Sar) and Peter (Schmeichel) for the No. 1 spot historically.” The Norwegian also insisted afterwards the win would have no bearing on his future despite the presence of most of United's power brokers, including executive vice-chairman Ed Woodward, former chief executive David Gill and former manager Alex Ferguson in London. “This game was never about me

and him,” Solskjaer said of his Argentinian counterpart. “For us, it's three points. We had to beat them today so we had a chance to catch them. Seven points is catchable, 13 would have been impossible. “I'm just doing my job until my contract runs out at the end of June. The win was massive. Results like this give you confidence.” While de Gea thwarted Spurs' bid to record a first league double over United since the 1989-1990 season, Pochettino showed little sign of disappointment, lauding his side for “one of the best performances that I saw since I've been here and the best 45 minutes (after half-time)”. THE GUARDIAN, REUTERS, THE TIMES, LONDON

News analysis

De Gea feted as hero but United success was gallant team effort



Sazali Abdul Aziz
In London

It would be easy to simply file this one under “Games Manchester United Won Thanks To David de Gea”. And yet, while that particular cabinet must be bulging after the Spain goalkeeper's latest outstanding performance, the Red Devils' 1-0 win over Tottenham Hotspur at Wembley Stadium on Sunday was by no means an injustice.

The travelling United faithful celebrated wildly in the stands at their corner of the stadium for some time after the majority of the 80,000 crowd had exited and had every reason to be thrilled. For it was the way they saw off Mauricio Pochettino's formidable Spurs side that mattered to them. They were gritty, opportunistic, confident. Even when Spurs had stirred from their slumber – they did not register a single shot on target in the first half – and started testing de Gea, one effort after another, United's players did not panic. Jesse Lingard shone brighter than his England teammate Dele Alli, Paul Pogba was a cocky, assured presence at the tip of United's midfield trident, and the duo of Ander Herrera and Nemanja Matic behind him, so often the target of fans' ire under the dark Mourinho

days, were excellent. Centre-back Victor Lindelof, meanwhile, stuck to Spurs' chief scorer Harry Kane like a leech, snapping away at his heels and giving him hardly any room in the penalty box. Luke Shaw, Ashley Young and de Gea drew jeers and whistles from the home supporters for their time-wasting tactics in protecting their lead, and looked fully in control – something that rarely happened before Mourinho's sacking just before Christmas. The swagger is back. It should be noted, though, that the two teams had vastly different build-ups to Sunday's game. United spent a week basking in the warmth with a training camp in Dubai, while Spurs negotiated a hard-earned 1-0 win over Chelsea in the League Cup semi-final. This explained in part Spurs' slow

Even when Spurs had stirred from their slumber – they did not register a single shot on target in the first half – and started testing de Gea, one effort after another, United's players did not panic.

start, and United's quickness of thought, which was highlighted by Pogba's superb pass to release Marcus Rashford, who raced past Jan Vertonghen to arrow a shot beyond Hugo Lloris just before half-time. Much has been made of Spurs' title tilt – which now looks unlikely after two consecutive Premier League losses at home – but United exposed their shallow squad's inadequacies. When Moussa Sissoko was forced off in the first half, they had no established central midfielder on the bench to come on for him. Eric Dier and Victor Wanyama are on the mend from injuries, while Mousa Dembele has started only seven games and is reportedly on the verge of a lucrative move to China. Worse still, talisman Kane limped off the pitch after appearing to

twist his ankle late in the game. The team's second highest goal-getter? Asian Cup-bound Son. Last week, Pochettino, who has been tipped as the leading contender for the permanent manager's job at United, spoke about Spurs having to “operate differently” if they are to take the next step and rub shoulders with the elite of European football. His words were taken as a call for more investment from Spurs, even if he downplayed his remarks later. If the London club do not spend in the January transfer window, though, the lure of resources at Old Trafford in the summer could be too much to turn down for Pochettino. msazali@sph.com.sg • Sazali's trip is hosted by Spurs' global principal partners AIA.



Lionel Messi scoring Barcelona's second goal against Eibar at the Nou Camp on Sunday. It was his 400th LaLiga goal after just 435 games. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

MESSI NOTCHES 400 LALIGA GOALS

The Barcelona star reaches landmark with league's next highest scorer 89 goals behind

BARCELONA • Lionel Messi has been called many things in his career, from genius to greatest of all time (Goat) and, on Sunday, he added "from another galaxy" to the ever-growing list of superlatives tossed his way.

The Barcelona talisman terrorised Eibar to rack up his 400th LaLiga goal in just 435 games – a re-

markable ratio coach Ernesto Valverde labelled as "monstrous".

He drove the ball home after being teed up by Luis Suarez, who added a brace either side of Messi extending his record as LaLiga's all-time goalscorer, with the Spanish champions taking apart their opponents 3-0 at home for a five-point cushion at the top of the table.

Incredibly, it was one of his quieter nights at the Nou Camp despite increasing his lead over rival and the league's second-highest scorer, Cristiano Ronaldo, to 89 goals.

While Ronaldo, now at Juventus, still owns a better goals-to-game ratio, with his 311 strikes coming in 292 matches, the night was all about Messi even though Suarez and Philippe Coutinho also picked up the plaudits.

Valverde told reporters: "It's easy to say, but you have to score them one after the other, it's a long-term

job. His numbers are stratospheric, incredible. Messi is an extraordinary player because he is not only a scorer. It's everything that he creates around him too."

Barcelona saluted his feat, tweeting crown and goat emojis and calling him "his goat-ness", while their beaten opponents also tweeted a show of respect for his achievement.

Messi is now only the second player to notch 400 or more goals in European football's top-five leagues after Ronaldo (409), but

has reached the milestone having played 63 fewer games.

In Seville, Real Madrid beat Betis 2-1 courtesy of a last-gasp free kick from Dani Ceballos, who came back to haunt his former club off the bench, to remain 10 points adrift of Barcelona.

Luka Modric had opened the scoring but Betis were in the ascendancy after Sergio Canales poked in a second-half equaliser against his old side.

But Ceballos, who left Betis for Madrid two years ago and was heavily booed after being introduced, snatched the dramatic victory two minutes from time.

Although he scored on his first free-kick attempt for Real, the former Betis academy product admitted to mixed feelings afterwards as "he did not expect this reception".

He told TV channel Movistar: "It's a field that has given me everything. I'm happy, but I leave with the bittersweet feeling of not having the affection of (those) who were my fans for so long."

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE, REUTERS

Asian Cup 2019

Son may not be thrown into the fray

AL-AIN • While the arrival of Son Heung-min has installed South Korea as favourites for the Asian Cup, coach Paulo Bento may be forced to wrap their star in cotton wool as "he has played a lot of games during the last months".

The Tottenham forward arrived in the United Arab Emirates yesterday to join the Taeguk Warriors for the rest of the tournament after an arrangement was struck with the Premier League side for him to be excused for their first two games.

A video posted on the Instagram page of the Asian Football Confederation showed Son signing autographs upon arriving from London.

With South Korea having already reached the last 16, fans may not

get a chance to see the 26-year-old in tomorrow's Group C dead rubber against China as the team need to take stock of his fitness levels.

Son, who has eight goals and seven assists in Spurs' last 12 league games, has played nearly 1,000 minutes in 16 games for his club this season, on top of his appearances at last year's World Cup and their title-winning Asian Games run.

Bento told reporters: "Of course, a player with the quality that Son has... can help the team. But we need to wait until the game against China or the knockout phase.

"We will talk and then we are going to take the best decisions for the team."

Despite South Korea labouring to

successive 1-0 group-stage wins and failing to turn their domination into goals, the Portuguese hinted he would resist throwing Son into the fray, insisting that South Korea were "not going to change our way of playing".

He said: "What we are going to do is improve our collective game, try to attack better than we have played until now."

While Spurs manager Mauricio Pochettino has lamented the absence of Son, who could miss up to five games if his country reaches the Cup final on Feb 1, the player is also "very sorry" for being away at a crucial point of their season.

He added: "I miss already in September (due to the Jakarta Games).

I feel sorry for my teammates, the fans and the coaching staff. It's difficult. Sometimes, it's a bit sad but it is also important for my country.

"I hope I can keep my form for the national team and when I come back here again as well."

However, South Koreans are hoping he will instead take out his frustrations on their opponents, with Son expected to fire Bento's men to glory and end their Asian Cup hurt. They have finished runners-up four times, the latest at the previous edition in Australia.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE, DPA, REUTERS

ASIAN CUP
South Korea v China: Singtel TV Ch116 & StarHub Ch210, tomorrow, 9.20pm



Time for a wifie as South Korea's Son Heung-min arrives at Dubai airport yesterday to join his national team in the Asian Cup. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Premier League talking points

1

FULHAM FLATTER TO DECEIVE

Fulham played like world beaters for two minutes at Turf Moor and like a beaten Premier League side for too long afterwards.

The start they received through Andre Schurrle's exquisite opener against Burnley was beyond anyone's expectations, though what followed was all too familiar.

While Claudio Ranieri attempted to put on a brave face afterwards, claiming his side deserved a point, the Cottagers can ill-afford to squander points against fellow strugglers as it is what happens in the final third that counts.

2

WAGNER LAMENTS LACK OF VAR

Another messy refereeing decision, another vote for technology. Confusion reigned after Lee Mason retracted his decision to award Huddersfield a penalty at Cardiff and such a reverse comes at a cost.

The Terriers can feel hard done by, with manager David Wagner – without a win since November – referencing Michael Oliver's failure to give his side another penalty at Brighton last month.

By the time the Video Assistant Referee (VAR) is introduced in the league next season, it will probably be too late for the Terriers.

3

HASENHUTTL ADDS STEEL

Southampton's gutsy away victory over Leicester felt like the sort of game that they would have lost prior to Ralph Hasenhuttl's appointment.

But, despite playing with 10 men for the entire second half, it says much for the renewed belief the Austrian has instilled, and in particular the way the team are organised defensively, that the Saints saw the game out without ever looking that uncomfortable.

Despite being in charge for only seven league matches, he has already won three games, as many as former manager Mark Hughes managed in 22 games, with James Ward-Prowse admitting "the difference has been unbelievable".

4

EVERTON'S LOANEES BRING HOPE

Relief was etched all over Marco Silva's face as Everton claimed an invaluable first win in five home league games.

The contributions of Kurt Zouma and Andre Gomes were not lost on the Everton manager, both overcoming subdued starts to bring much-needed strength, a finishing touch in front of goal in the defender's case, and composure to the display.

The two took responsibility that other senior Everton players did not, a concern for Silva given that both are at the club on loan.

THE GUARDIAN

LOTTERY

TOTO

Mon, 14 Jan 2019 Draw No. 3440/2019

Group 1 Prize \$9,588,137

Winning Numbers

10 13 21 27 34 40 41

Add. No.

10 13 21 27 34 40 41

Prize Group

Share Amount

No. of Winning Shares

Group 1

\$9,588,137

1

Group 2

\$107,325

9

Group 3

\$1,695

392

Group 4

\$414

875

Group 5

\$50

21,834

Group 6

\$25

24,027

Group 7

\$10

385,481

Group 1 prize and total share amount for Group 1 may differ due to rounding.

Next Draw Thu, 17 Jan 2019, 6.30pm Draw No. 3441/2019

Group 1 Prize

\$1,000,000

est.

Draw Venue: Singapore Pools (Private) Limited, 210 Middle Road, #01-01, Singapore 188994

SPORTS FIXTURES HIGHLIGHTS

Event

Home

Away

Timing

Venue

Tue, 15 Jan 2019

A League

Brisbane Roar

Melbourne Vict

4.50pm

LW

Asian Cup

Australia

Syria

9.30pm

LW*

Asian Cup

Palestine

Jordan

9.30pm

LW*

Wed, 16 Jan 2019

English Cup

Blackburn

Newcastle

3.45am

LW*

LW* : Telecast available at Livewire(Marina Bay Sands) only
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SB: SportsBuzz@Kwai (21 years and above)
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RETIREMENT OFF, WBC BOUT ON FOR RIDHWAN

Boxer says team ‘now aligned towards same goal’ and vows to turn the tables on Ambunda

Sazali Abdul Aziz

A “clash of ideas” led to his shock “retirement” announcement last week, but top local professional

boxer Muhamad Ridhwan now says that he has his eyes firmly focused on winning the World Boxing Council (WBC) silver featherweight title on March 29 at the Singapore Indoor Stadium.

The 31-year-old told The Straits Times yesterday: “The magnitude of the event, long training camp overseas, sponsorships, collaborations and many other issues inevitably bring a new kind of pressure... We are all learning. “At some point, ideas clash and arguments happen. “After giving the matter some time and letting everyone cool off,

we all came together again and are now aligned towards the same goal. “Everyone is on board working very hard to make this the biggest boxing event that is to take place in Singapore. “These things happen at this high level and we’ll just learn to deal with it better.” He declined to provide details of what disagreements took place,

and with whom. Last Friday, he caused a stir when he put up a Facebook post captioned “The road has ended”. It read: “Hi all. Guess what? All good things come to an end. It was fun while it lasted. This is it for me. I am retiring.” His promoter, Ringstar, laughed off the post then, asserting that the boxer would, as scheduled, travel to the Philippines for a training camp this week to prepare for the WBC silver title bout against Namibian Paulus Ambunda. Ridhwan had lost a split decision to Ambunda after 12 rounds in a fight for the International Boxing Organisation (IBO) world super bantamweight title on Sept 29, his only defeat in 12 professional fights. The March 29 fight is a chance for him to gain a measure of revenge in what has been billed the biggest fight for any Singaporean boxer. About 7,000 tickets – priced

from \$38 to \$118 – go on sale on Friday at www.sportshub.com.sg/Ridhwan-Ambunda. VIP Ringside Sofa Seats are also available at \$1,888, and they come with uninterrupted views of the ring and a personalised butler service with free flow of drinks. An early-bird discount of 30 per cent off all tickets is available until Feb 28, with the promotion code Ringstar. Now that the drama has been cast aside, Ridhwan insisted that he is focused on the biggest fight of his career. “I am not retiring,” he declared. “Maybe I did for a couple of hours. So you can say I am coming out of retirement to retire Paulus Ambunda on March 29 at the Singapore Indoor Stadium, when we fight for the WBC World Silver Featherweight title.”

msazali@sph.com.sg



Ridhwan (right) sparring with an at-risk youth under The Chosen Wan (TCW) Cares Programme. His March 29 bout is a rematch of his split-decision loss to Namibian Paulus Ambunda last September. ST PHOTO: CHONG JUN LIANG

BUILD-UP OF STRESS

Issues inevitably bring a new kind of pressure... We are all learning. At some point, ideas clash and arguments happen. After giving the matter some time and letting everyone cool off, we all came together again.



MUHAMAD RIDHWAN, on the lead-up to his shock move last week.

Another perfect game and 2nd place for Cherie

David Lee

She had been bowling for 17 years when she recorded her first perfect game at last year’s Brunswick Euro Challenge in March. Then, in a fortnight, national kegger Cherie Tan claimed two

300s when she made 12 strikes in a row at the AIK International Tournament in Stockholm on Jan 3, before repeating the feat at the 538-bowler Brunswick Ballmaster Open in Helsinki last week. More significantly, the 30-year-old has demonstrated great consistency to kick off the year with back-

to-back podium finishes. In Sunday’s Ballmaster Open stepladder final in Finland, she was beaten 234-213 by the hosts’ Joonas Jehkinen and took home a cheque for €6,000 (\$\$9,300) to add to her second-place finish in Sweden. Tan said: “As I did not do as well as I wanted to in 2017, my coaches

and I decided to make changes to my game last April to improve my consistency and get better shot repetition. “But the changes were not giving me the consistency I needed so we decided to start from basics and use the opportunity to increase my ball speed. We also included urethane

balls in my arsenal to give me an alternative lane match-up. “Getting my game back on track, my targets this year are to make the team for the World Women’s Championships and SEA Games and do well for both to bring glory to Singapore.” National head coach Jason

Yeong-Nathan said the target this year for the women’s team is to win a medal at both these meets. The former national bowler said: “They have been working on self-improvement of their physical, mental, technical and tactical game. They took the last few months of 2018 to spend some time on those areas of their game. “For every tournament they go for, they have their own key performance indicators to hit to get them ready for the majors.”

davidlee@sph.com.sg

Next 48 Hours

TODAY

FOOTBALL

AFC Asian Cup Group B: Australia v Syria (Singtel TV Ch115 & StarHub Ch209), Palestine v Jordan (Ch116 & Ch210) – 9.20pm. English FA Cup 3rd-round replay: Blackburn v Newcastle (Singtel TV Ch111, tomorrow, 3.40am).

TENNIS

Australian Open Day 2 (Singtel TV Ch114/Ch115 & StarHub Ch208/209, 8am & 4pm).

TOMORROW

FOOTBALL

AFC Asian Cup Group C: Kyrgyzstan v Philippines (Singtel TV Ch115 & StarHub Ch209), South Korea v China (Ch116 & Ch210) – 9.20pm. Gp D: Vietnam v Yemen (Ch115 & Ch209), Iran v Iraq (Ch116 & Ch210) – 11.50pm. English FA Cup 3rd-round replay: Southampton v Derby (Singtel TV Ch111, Thursday, 3.40am).

TENNIS

Australian Open Day 3 (Singtel TV Ch114/Ch115 & StarHub Ch208/209, 8am & 4pm).

For latest updates, go to singtelstv.com.sg & starhubgo.com or check the on-screen TV guide.

Raptors edge Wizards out in double overtime

WASHINGTON • It took a snowstorm outside and the best team in the National Basketball Association (NBA) to cool off the Washington Wizards’ mini hot streak on Sunday. After taking care of two of the top four teams in the Eastern Conference in their previous two games, the Wizards mounted a late comeback attempt against the Toronto Raptors but ultimately fell, 140-138, in double overtime. The loss featured a slower-than-slow start but morphed into a display of the type of sharp play that earned victories against the Milwaukee Bucks and Philadelphia 76ers. The Raptors, who improved to a league-leading 33-12 and racked up their fifth straight win, burst out of the gate and were up 51-28 late in the second quarter, and by 17 with less than a minute to play in the third at the Capital One Arena. Washington (18-26), however, chipped away at their lead and were fuelled by Bradley Beal’s second career triple-double with 43 points, a game-high 15 assists and 10 rebounds. The All-Star led all scorers with his six-for-12 shooting from behind the arc helping the Wizards to set a franchise record with 19 three-

pointers in a single game. But the effort of Kawhi Leonard, who paced the visitors with 41 points and 10 of those coming in overtime, was too strong to overcome as Toronto finally put away their opponents in a game that coach Nick Nurse felt they “were lucky to get out of here with a win”. Serge Ibaka drained the go-ahead three-pointer with 15 seconds left in the second overtime, but instead opted to shine the limelight on his “superstar” teammate. He told reporters: “That’s how we need him to play and he did his job. When we need him to step up and make big plays, he did them for us.” While the Wizards were crestfallen at coming up just short, their coach Scott Brooks said he was “proud of our guys (for) the way they battled”. He added: “It was a great game. Any time you have two teams lay everything they have on the floor, you can walk away knowing that you did your best, and tonight was one of those games. “Disappointed that we didn’t get the win, but if we keep playing like this, we’re going to be in a lot of good games and in a good position to win these games in the end.”



Brooks also hailed Beal for stepping up in the absence of five-time All-Star John Wall, who was ruled out for the rest of the season late last month with a heel injury. He said: “Made big shot after big shot after big shot, and we needed every bit... He competes. He puts us in the position to win, that’s what your All-Stars are supposed to do.” In Los Angeles, Cedi Osman scored 20 points, and Rodney Hood added 18 as the Cleveland Cavaliers put an end to their 12-game losing

streak, hanging on for a 101-95 victory over the Los Angeles Lakers. While the visitors remain the only NBA team yet to reach double digits in wins, the home team’s form was only marginally better, having gone 3-7 in the absence of LeBron James. The 14-time All-Star has yet to play since suffering a groin injury in the Christmas Day win over the Golden State Warriors. AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE, REUTERS, WASHINGTON POST

Toronto Raptors forward Kawhi Leonard hanging on to the rim after a dunk over Washington Wizards forward Otto Porter Jr. The Raptors, who improved to a league-leading 33-12, racked up their fifth straight win. PHOTO: REUTERS

SPORT

Australian Open 2019

MURRAY AIMING FOR HOME SWANSONG

He feels Wimbledon would be the right time and place to end his illustrious tennis career

MELBOURNE • Andy Murray's plan is to hang on until Wimbledon, to possibly bid tennis a fond farewell at home, where his status is secure as Britain's greatest player.

But he acknowledged that the possibility existed that he would not be able to play even a few more months amid a painful and debilitating hip condition.

After his Australian Open campaign came to a premature end yesterday, the Scot revealed he would decide on further surgery that could end his career "within a week".

He told reporters: "I have basically like two options. One is to take the next 4½ months off, then build up, you know, play Wimbledon.

"I mean, I'm really struggling. I can't walk properly at all just now. I could play another match, but I want to improve my quality of life because even if I take four months, I still can't walk.

"But having an operation like that, there's absolutely no guarantees I'd be able to play again. I'm fully aware of that. It's a really big operation."

In the fourth hour of his slugfest with Spain's Roberto Bautista Agut, Murray bowed out with a gutsy 6-4,

6-4, 6-7 (5-7), 6-7 (4-7), 6-2 first-round loss that brought a prolonged standing ovation from the Melbourne Park crowd.

The 31-year-old was emotional as he addressed the fans, saying: "If this was my last match, as you say, it was an amazing way to end the game. But it wasn't enough tonight so congratulations to Roberto. Maybe I'll see you again. I'll do everything possible to try. But I'll give it my best shot. If this is my last match, I gave everything."

Murray had entered a raucous arena to a huge ovation as Scottish flags and Union Jacks were flown while one banner proclaimed: "There will only ever be one Andy Murray".

The rollicking support lifted him and despite frequently grimacing with pain, he showed several glimpses of the tenacity and grit that saw him lift three Grand Slam titles.

Agut, who will face unseeded Australian John Millman in the second round tomorrow, called it "an incredible night" as a big-screen tribute from a whole phalanx of the world's top tennis players, including Roger Federer, Novak Djokovic, Rafael Nadal, Caroline Wozniacki

and Sloane Stephens was shown after the match.

With his mother Judy recording the moment on her phone and brother Jamie watching on, Murray declared "it was a very special thing to have the respect of your peers".

"I've been very fortunate – and unlucky – to compete in an era with all those great players around."

In the earlier matches, Nadal showed no signs of any injury worries and no mercy in a thumping of 6-4, 6-3, 7-5 Australian wildcard James Duckworth. The Spaniard will next play another Australian in Matthew Ebden tomorrow.

Swiss Federer also warmed up for a run at a record seventh Major Down Under and his 21st overall by breezing past Uzbek Denis Istomin 6-3, 6-4, 6-4 to set up a clash with Britain's Dan Evans.

In the women's draw, Danish defending champion Wozniacki, Germany's Angelique Kerber and Russian Maria Sharapova all eased into the next round. WASHINGTON POST, AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

AUSTRALIAN OPEN

Day 2: Singtel TV Ch114/Ch115 & StarHub Ch208/209, 8am & 4pm

With his Australian Open campaign ending prematurely yesterday, Andy Murray says he would decide on further surgery that could end his career "within a week".

PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE



I GAVE MY ALL

If this was my last match, as you say, it was an amazing way to end the game. But it wasn't enough tonight.



ANDY MURRAY, who is uncertain if he can last till his home Grand Slam in July.

SportingLife

Osaka is a talent but true greatness can't be hurried



Rohit Brijnath

Assistant Sports Editor

Naomi Osaka knows it is here, her Australian summer of scrutiny, her January of judgment. Newspaper stories will record how many people in Japan are watching, her Instagram account will be scanned, her autograph begged for, her form debated, her answers weighed, even as one question stalks her.

Can she win another one? A second Slam? Till it's like a mad chorus in her ear. There is no pause for the young, only expectation.

In the real world, 21-year-olds party on weekends and sleep in, but in the tennis world 21-year-olds like Osaka must rise and win a Slam and then follow it by being all concentrated, consistent brilliance. Says Raemon Sluiter, coach of world No. 9 Kiki Bertens, down the phone line from Australia: "It's not fair."

Osaka is still an unready, unfolding talent, who won her first

two titles only last year, but people aren't always conditioned to think that. You win a Slam, as she did at the US Open, and they think you've arrived. But it's never quite as simple.

Garbine Muguruza won two Slams but surrounded them with five second-round losses. Jelena Ostapenko won the French Open in 2017 and has had three third-round losses since. They are stars and yet students. Only works in progress.

As Sluiter says, when Ostapenko won Paris she was physically not yet "the athlete she is going to be in a few years if she works very hard". Progress requires the calm of time and talent needs the oil of experience and you can't hurry this.

Two hot weeks of fearless play can win a player a Slam but then every week thereafter the spotlight is on her. Underdog suddenly finds she's top dog. But building a champion is like constructing a palace, it takes a while, and even Pete Sampras, who won the US Open in 1990 at 19, admitted that in his book, A Champion's Mind.

"I'd be crazy to look back at winning that first Open title with regret, but I honestly wish I had been a little older. I wish I had been a little better developed, both as a player and a person, a little wiser to

Osaka is still an unready, unfolding talent, who only won her first two titles last year, but people aren't always conditioned to think that. You win a Slam, as she did at the US Open, and they think you've arrived. It's never quite as simple.

the way of the world and what it expects of you and how it judges you... maintaining a high position was a big responsibility and it called for a lot of work and a certain kind of maturity and toughness that I lacked."

Like in real life, a degree in tennis takes time. To go out on tour is in effect to attend class. You learn about scheduling and how form suddenly plateaus. You learn about patience and how to solve problems at 2-5. You learn about pressure and presidents wanting to shake your hand. You learn how to use emotion, make speeches and

stay in matches.

"When you're young," explains Sluiter, "you don't think about things too much and it can work in your advantage. You just start swinging. When you get older and get results and expectations build, you start thinking. That's where it gets tough for players. But eventually they get the best out of themselves when they're thinking but to get to that point they have to get through a lot of phases."

We're so focused on success that we go blind to the process, to the athlete's uncertain, anxious, hiccuping, brave journey to finding her consistent self. When Courtney Coogan, the WTA Insider, asked coach Darren Cahill last year what he was most proud of about Simona Halep's shining 2018 when she won her first Slam, his reply was telling.

It was, he said, her "ability to mature over the last couple of years, to put her head down, and realise that she was not far away. It's tough sometimes to keep that belief when you're so close and you don't quite get to where you're dreaming of going."

In time, athletes build libraries of experience and when they're unsure, they reach within for reassurance. At 37, Roger Federer has mutinous lungs but also a filing cabinet of 1,440 matches and 99

titles to lean on. We keep stressing on tennis' margins, a point here, a centimetre there, so what is experience worth?

But learning is difficult because it involves losing, it means inspecting your flaws, confronting your panic, managing your emotions, fine-tuning your attitude, ignoring the social media sniping and accepting apprenticeship is a rollercoaster.

"It can be very hard," says Sluiter, "if you did well at a Slam and next time you lose in the first or second round. It's easy to lie in bed for a few days and not read the newspapers. But if you run away from it and don't learn from it, then the mistakes you made are going to be repeated."

Ostapenko, for instance, is learning but it's a sweaty slog. Yesterday she, 21, lost in the first round of the Open and people will raise an inquiring eyebrow. But even Serena The Sublime won her first Slam at the 1999 US Open and took 10 Slams to win another. Even Djokovic The Dependable, the 2008 Australian champion, took 12 more Slams before he won his second one.

Greatness, they remind us, can't just be easily slipped on, it must soak in slowly.

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SportsWorld

Japanese sweep all 3 S'pore Open slots

A trio of lesser-known Japanese golfers came through yesterday's qualifying to make it to Thursday's first round of the SMBC Singapore Open.

Norihiko Furusho topped the list of 68 hopefuls at Sentosa Golf Club's New Tanjong Course with a six-under 64.

Ryutaro Nagano (65) and Daisuke Matsubara (66) joined him for the event sanctioned by the Asian Tour and Japan Golf Tour Organisation.

Kuchar ends strongly for four-stroke win

LOS ANGELES • Matt Kuchar overcame early wobbles to race home to his second victory in two months, a four-shot triumph at golf's Sony Open in Hawaii on Sunday.

After losing his two-stroke advantage after the fourth hole, he kicked things into high gear by birdieing six of his final 10 holes to finish with a four-under 66 that took him to 22-under 258 at Waialae Country Club in Honolulu. Runner-up Andrew Putnam closed with a 68. REUTERS

No Tokyo Games tickets till late April

TOKYO • General tickets for the Tokyo Olympics in 2020 will go on sale as early as late April this year, it has been learnt.

The Games' organising committee is making final arrangements with an eye on promoting ticket sales in tandem with the Golden Week holiday period and heightening the mood for the event. WASHINGTON POST

Maradona recovering after surgery

BUENOS AIRES • Argentinian football great Diego Maradona has been discharged from hospital after undergoing surgery for internal bleeding, his lawyer and spokesman Matias Morla said in a social media post on Sunday.

The operation was scheduled earlier this month after doctors identified the problem during a routine medical check-up at the Olivos clinic on the outskirts of the capital. AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Capello calls for protests on pitch

ROME • Serie A footballers should stage sit-down protests on the pitch if there is racist chanting during a match, former Juventus, AC Milan and Real Madrid coach Fabio Capello suggested yesterday.

Italian football has struggled to stop racist behaviour by fans and the problem returned to the spotlight on Boxing Day when Napoli's Senegalese defender Kalidou Koulibaly was taunted during a match against Inter Milan at the San Siro. REUTERS

Ex-Forest player O'Neill may be boss

LONDON • Nottingham Forest are set to appoint their former player Martin O'Neill as manager to succeed Aitor Karanka, the British media reported yesterday.

The Spaniard parted company last week with the Championship club, twice European Cup winners, after just 12 months in charge at the City Ground. REUTERS

life

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Singapore Art Week

Whimsical works

Sweep the floor to create art and exchange items for Robot Coins at IT mall Sim Lim Square at this year's offbeat exhibits and installations



Akshita Nanda

Unique and intimate art experiences feature prominently in this year's Singapore Art Week (SAW) – the biggest visual arts celebration here.

Apart from mega light shows organised by National Gallery Singapore and big-ticket contemporary art fairs such as Art Stage Singapore and S.E.A. Focus, there will be a number of quirky exhibitions, including an interactive installation about household chores called Home(work), and one where artists create site-specific works at Sim Lim Square – better known for selling functional electronics than displaying art.

Running from Saturday to Jan 27, this is the seventh edition of Singapore Art Week, a joint initiative by the National Arts Council, Singapore Tourism Board and Singapore Economic Development Board.

Last year's Art Week drew

590,000 viewers, according to the arts council.

Ms Linda de Mello, director, sector development (visual arts), National Arts Council, said: "We're very encouraged that the visual arts community continues to be excited by Singapore Art Week – over the past few years, we've increasingly seen more home-grown artists and groups keen to be part of SAW."

"Their ground-up initiatives uncover new presentation spaces and push creative boundaries in the intersections of art, culture, technology, design and heritage. These innovative ideas also reach out to those new to the arts, making the visual arts even more engaging for all."

akshitan@sph.com.sg

• For the full Singapore Art Week calendar, go to www.artweek.sg

Quirky take on chores

What is the value we assign to domestic labour and how creative can we get while doing household chores?

Artist collective Proxy puts a quirky spin on these questions through its interactive installation Home(work) at the National Design Centre for Singapore Art Week.

The four-member group – Melvin Wong, Charmaine Poh, Ong Lijie and Lim Cheng Jun – is creating a "showflat" in a space that is roughly 50 sq m. However, this small flat has certain quirks. The fridge door leads to another room, for example, and visitors can play with reimagined domestic tools. A light installation is also a kinetic sculpture and a broom has colour pencils in place of bristles.

Sweeping the floor is often seen as a menial chore, but sweeping the floor in Home(work) will create art.

"We mimic household chores in a fun way," says Proxy member Melvin Wong, 29, who, like his fellow artists, has been mopping floors and scrubbing bathrooms at home for more than a decade.

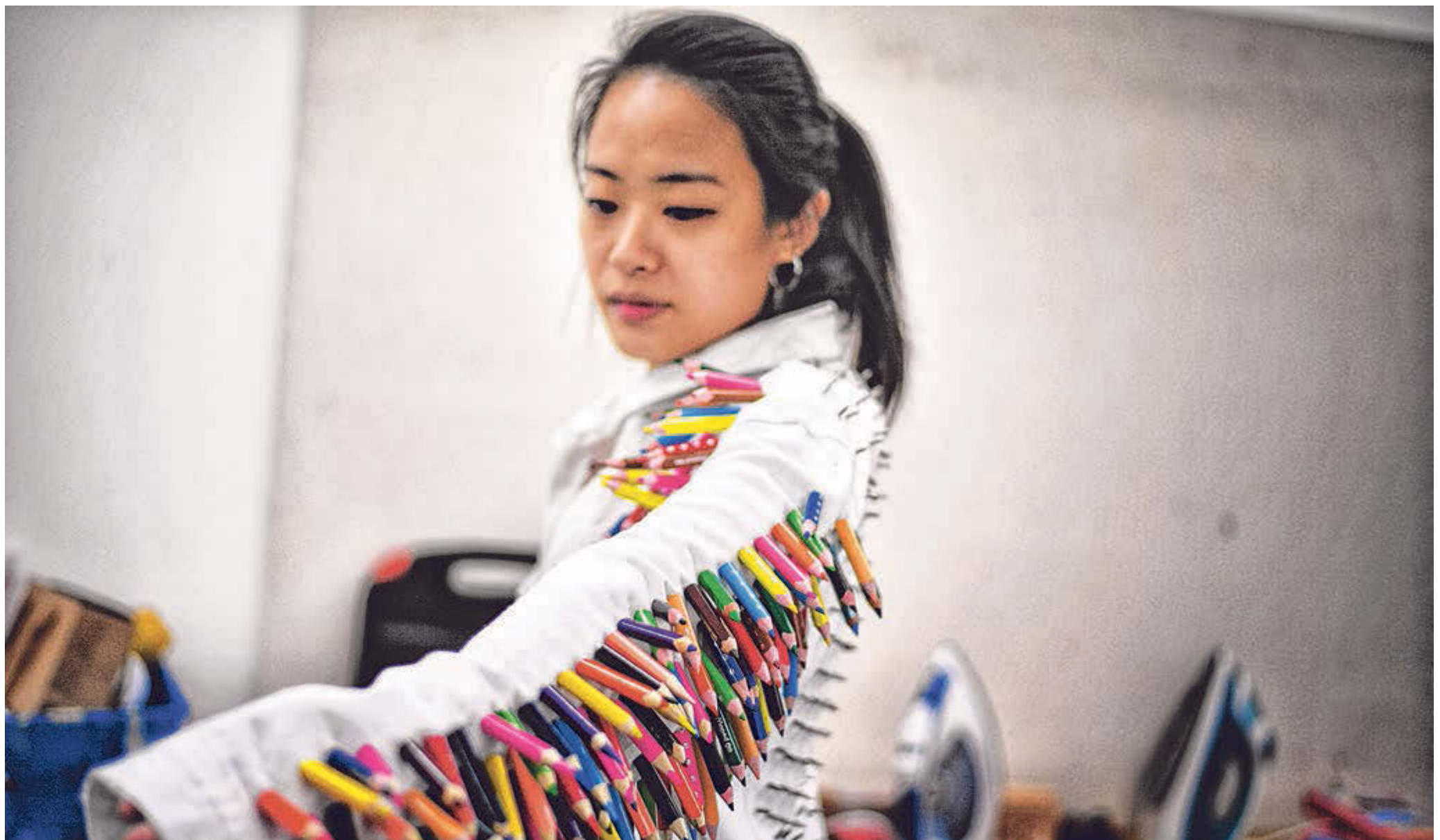
Ong, 25, says: "Why is it when somebody says: 'I'm a homemaker', we think: 'That's not a job and it's not creative'? We want to ask our viewers how do we value labour in the context of the household and domesticity."

Proxy has also opened its showflat to works created by artists Yang Jie, Fiona Seow, Emma Chong, Joseph Chiang and Izzad Radzali Shah, all of whom used or reimagined household tools like sponges or cups.

Three performance artists, Ila, Ben Yap and Isabel Phua, will also use the space. Ila's interactive performances on Saturday and Jan 26 look at how maintaining a household is an art form, and Proxy is looking for volunteers to take part.

There are parallels between artists and housewives, the artists of Proxy say. Both have to be creative, but the fruits of their labour are often unappreciated.

"What is the value we assign to art?" asks Lim, 30, rhetorically.



Charmaine Poh of Proxy models a coat studded with colour pencils and nails designed by the collective for Home(work), an installation about domestic labour and creativity. ST PHOTO: ARIFFIN JAMAR

Sim Lim Square's artists

Heard of Robot Coins? Taiwanese artist Ko Tzu-an is planning to introduce this "currency" at Sim Lim Square. People will receive Robot Coins in exchange for any item they choose to hand over.

Ko, 33, hopes to get retailers at the IT mall to join in her art project and accept Robot Coins in exchange for their goods.

The only problem? "I think people will think this is another scam," she says, referring to Sim Lim Square's reputation as a hotbed for counterfeit goods – last August, the police raided four shops at the mall and seized about 6,000 counterfeit items.

Once known as the place to shop for electronics – as well as pirated video games – Sim Lim Square has seen its fortunes dwindle in recent years. An art residency during Singapore Art Week aims to get participants and artists to rethink their engagement with the mall and its role in high-tech Singapore.

The Sim Lim Square Art Residency was initiated by art collective Inter-Mission, co-founded by



Artist assistant Jovan Tng (far left) holds up an image of Singaporean artist Chong Weixin, who is participating virtually in the Sim Lim Square Art Residency by art collective Inter-Mission. Also taking part are (from left) Singaporean artist Johann Yamin, Taiwanese artist Ko Tzu-an and South Korean artist Eom Jeongwon. With them is Inter-Mission co-founder Ulrich Lau (right). ST PHOTO: NG SOR LUAN

artists Ulrich Lau and Teow Yue Han, and lasts for about three weeks till Jan 27.

It has Ko occupy a shop unit on the sixth floor of the mall along with South Korean artist Eom Jeongwon and Singaporean artists Johann Yamin and Chong Weixin.

The studios are open daily to visitors and the artists will present an exhibition of works from Jan 22 to 27.

For part of the residency, Chong will be present virtually, since she is

working on another project in Europe.

She navigates the mall through video call, her assistant Jovan Tng serving as a body double and moving around in her stead.

Her project stems from her interest in the virtual avatars people have left online over the years. Start a teenage blog and 10 years later, the blog is still there, a record of your former self.

The mall exists in a time capsule for Chong, 31, who remembers visit-

ing it regularly as a student, shopping for thumbdrives or other electronics.

Eom, 28, is similarly interested in wearable electronics and will get visitors to wear camera mounts and walk around, taking footage of the area.

Johann, 25, meanwhile, is inspired by the pirated videogames he bought over the years, some from Sim Lim Square. Visitors can play games from the 1990s and early Noughties on old computers

he brought from his home. He is also creating a video installation based on footage from the games.

He says he often spent weekends in the mall as a child, shopping with his father.

"I'm quite excited by this residency because I'm interested in getting to know Sim Lim Square beyond a transactional relationship," he adds.

MORE STORIES on D2

VIEW IT / HOME(WORK)

WHERE: National Design Centre, 111 Middle Road

WHEN: Saturday to Jan 27, 9am to 9pm daily

ADMISSION: Free

INFO: www.facebook.com/home-workbyproxy

Singapore Art Week



Liza Markus created a sculpture inspired by the tug-of-war she feels regarding her Christian faith and how it was introduced to Indonesia by colonial powers, as well as her curiosity over the Catholic confessional. ST PHOTOS: ARIFFIN JAMAR, KHALID BABA

Exploring faiths

Talking about religion is often taboo, but two 20something artists want to spark honest conversations with their work.

Singaporean artist Nicole Phua and Indonesian artist Liza Markus are co-founders of The Right Belief, a platform for young artists to explore their faiths and traditions through art.

Their first project is Orthodox, a showcase of faith-inspired performance art, installation pieces, paintings, videos and sculpture done by Markus, Phua and 10 friends, many of whom are fellow graduates from the Nanyang Academy of Fine Art.

The exhibition is spread out over two galleries, Coda Culture and Your Mother Gallery, and opens during Singapore Art Week.

The other artists featured are Ahdini Izzatika, Faris Heizer, Farizi Noorfauzi, Jackson Kang, Kim Hyesu, Kuat Zhi Hooi, Moktarrullah Abdullah, Oneal Parbo, Phua Shi Ying and Yunita Rebekah.

Nicole Phua's work is a 45-minute performance inspired by funeral rites and beliefs about death and rebirth. The performance will take place when the exhibition opens at Coda Culture on Sunday. After that, the items used will remain in the exhibition.

Phua comes from a mixed-faith family, which means that sometimes, tough conversations are needed about funeral rites, for example. Her father is Catholic, with some Buddhist beliefs, and would insist on a Catholic funeral, while her mother, a free-thinker, would prefer cremation and for the ashes to be scattered at sea. "I'm split and confused," says the 21-year-old.

Markus has created a sculpture inspired by the tug-of-war she feels regarding her Christian faith and how it was introduced to Indonesia by colonial powers, as well as her curiosity over the confessional – she is not Catholic, but attended a Catholic school.

Figures made of soil and soap sit within a mirrored circle, evoking the notion of ritual purity.

"It's a self-mockery of how I feel," says the 23-year-old.

They gave their artist friends carte blanche to create any work based on their personal belief. The results range from a video recording of friends discussing death and marriage to an installation depicting what the creator thinks heaven might look like.

Both Phua and Markus emphasise that the works are based on each individual's faith and are not meant to hurt anyone's feelings.

"It presents a conversation that's hush-hush sometimes, but it shouldn't be hurtful," says Markus. "I've realised there are so many people just like me, convoluted in their feelings of faithfulness – or unfaithfulness."



Sebastian Chun with his installation Sticks on the Asian Civilisations Museum lawn. ST PHOTO: DESMOND FOO

Listen, smell, relax

When was the last time you sat under a tree? Artists Kaylene Tan and Ben Slater have worked with writers, musicians and landscape designers to transform Esplanade Park into a place that invites passers-by to stop, sit and listen to stories and songs that can be streamed on mobile devices by scanning QR codes placed around the park.

Though the park is known for national monuments such as the Cenotaph, commemorating soldiers

who died in the two world wars, the creators of Under The Five Trees invited collaborators to create songs and stories based on personal memories or oral history.

"Memories on a human scale are what we are interested in," says Tan.

Landscape designers have sown flowers in the grass or sculpted grassy mounds for people to mount.

Tan says: "We wanted to create very intimate experiences for the audience in a public space, to invite listeners to lose themselves in the song, story, natural environment."

Under The Five Trees is one of several artworks commissioned for the annual Light To Night Festival spearheaded by the National

Gallery Singapore.

The Singapore Art Week edition of the festival, which runs from Friday to Jan 27, invites viewers to discover art through intimate encounters using different senses.

Apart from Art Skins On Monuments, the popular light projections on buildings in the Civic District, the Gallery has created a Sensorial Trail within.

Visitors can enter its public spaces, touch the walls and release scents put there by Norway-born researcher and artist Sissel Tolaas in her work eau d'you Who Am I; or explore connections between music and visuals through Andy Chia's Voices Of Time, where visitors can create music that triggers visuals on the wall.

Next door, on the lawn of the Asian Civilisations Museum, Singaporean artist and designer Sebastian Chun has created Sticks, an installation of roughly 500 bamboo poles hammered into a tepee-like shape. Lounge chairs are placed around and within the structure.

Chun, 54, was inspired by his memories of playing the pick-up sticks strategy game as a child, as well as seeing many buildings in the area constructed by workers moving across bamboo scaffolding.

By day, viewers can seek refuge from the heat within the shade cast by the installation. At night, coloured lights give Sticks a different look.

Chun hopes to see visitors chatting, relaxing and maybe even sharing a picnic inside his work.

"The idea is that it doesn't have to be 'high art'. Art should be accessible to everyone," he says.



Kaylene Tan and Ben Slater on a mound which is part of their audio installation, Under The Five Trees, at Esplanade Park. ST PHOTO: TIMOTHY DAVID



Nicole Phua's work is inspired by funeral rites and beliefs about death and rebirth.

VIEW IT / ORTHODOX: A TWO-PART EXHIBITION

WHERE: Your Mother Gallery, 91 Hindoo Road

WHEN: Saturday to Feb 2, noon to 8pm daily (exhibition opens on Saturday, 7pm)

WHERE: Coda Culture, 05-05 Golden Mile Complex, 5001 Beach Road

WHEN: Sunday to Feb 3, noon to 8.30pm daily (exhibition opens on Sunday, 7pm)

ADMISSION: Free

INFO: therightbelief.weebly.com

Other highlights

BUY

Art Stage Singapore

What: The ninth edition of a major contemporary art fair with galleries, exhibitions from private collectors and talks by artists and curators.

Where: Level B2 Marina Bay Sands Expo & Convention Centre, 10 Bayfront Avenue

When: Jan 25 and 26, noon to 8pm; Jan 27, 11am to 6pm

Admission: \$50 (three-day pass), \$30 (one-day pass), from www.artstage.com/singapore/site/home

S.E.A. Focus: A Spotlight On South-east Asia

What: A home-grown boutique art fair with a regional focus.

Where: Gillman Barracks, Pavilion, Carpark B, Blocks 7 & 9, Lock Road

When: Jan 24, 3 to 7pm; Jan 25; 3 to 10pm; Jan 26 and 27, 11am to 7pm

Admission: \$20 (four-day pass), \$15 (one-day pass), from seafocus2019.peatix.com

WALK

Artwalk Little India

What: Wall murals, exhibitions and performances have been curated around Little India in a multidisciplinary art project that transforms the precinct. Artwalk is presented by the Singapore Tourism Board and Lasalle College of the Arts, with the support of the Little India Shopkeepers and Heritage Association.

When: Friday to Feb 2, at your own pace and time

Admission/info: Download brochure and maps from artwalklittleindia.sg. Free guided tours are conducted by Monster Day Tours on Fridays, 6.30pm, and Saturdays at 4 and 6.30pm. Go to artwalklittleindia2019.peatix.com to register

VIEW

Art Skins On Monuments: The Odyssey

What: The biggest facade light show in Singapore, with multimedia projected onto the walls of the National Gallery Singapore, The Arts House, Asian Civilisations Museum and Victoria Theatre and Concert Hall. Part of the Light To Night Festival.

Where: Civic District, around Empress Place

When: Friday to Jan 28, 8pm to midnight. Visuals are on loop

Admission: Free

Artist ahead of his time

An exhibition of Cheong Soo Pieng's works shows the late pioneer artist's versatility and sense of innovation

Toh Wen Li

Mention pioneer artist Cheong Soo Pieng and many people will recall his paintings of Balinese women. Others might remember him for his Drying Salted Fish painting, which appears on the back of Singapore's \$50 note.

Less known, perhaps, are the innovative techniques that went into his more abstract works, part of an upcoming exhibition at the STPI – Creative Workshop & Gallery in Robertson Quay that depicts the artist as someone working well ahead of his time.

Cheong, who is regarded as a pioneer of East-West modernism, is one of South-east Asia's most important artists from the post-war Chinese diaspora. Born in Xiamen in 1917, he immigrated to Singapore in 1946, where he taught at the Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts from 1947 to 1961. He died in 1983.

The exhibition, *Soo Pieng: Master Of Composition*, opens on Saturday and runs until March 9.

It will feature about 50 works from 1947 to 1983, which reflect Cheong's spirit of innovation and



Cheong Soo Pieng's works such as *Malay Boy With Bird* (1982) (far left), *Modern Painting* (1975) (left) and his abstract paintings of his three children (1974) (above) can be seen at the exhibition.

PHOTOS: STPI – CREATIVE WORKSHOP & GALLERY

versatility. Some of these are rarely shown in public – such as three abstract portraits of his three children, a figurative painting of a Malay Boy With Bird (1982) and several found object and earthenware sculptures.

While the artworks are on loan from Cheong's estate and private collectors, some will be for sale.

Veteran curator Seah Tzi-Yan, who curated the show with STPI, says: "A lot of the other artists at that time were very focused on experimenting and also creating an 'East-West art'. Many of them believed that, being Chinese artists living in this part of the world, they needed to create a new language for Chinese art to make it modern.

"Soo Pieng was really the one who went and experimented... If you look at his life's work, there was always this idea of 'How do I remake a Chinese painting so that it's a modern piece of work?'"

Many of the works on display have a contemporary feel, but were also products of their time.

The abstract portraits of his two sons and a daughter, dating back to 1974, for example, show the human figure deconstructed into geomet-

ric shapes and designs. The oil on canvas works also feature sand, resin, string and gunny sack or jute material.

"It's very 'immigrant', if you think about it," says Ms Seah, referring to the use of jute. "That was the way many people earned their living, carrying gunny sacks and bringing produce into Singapore for trade."

The exhibition has not been organised in a linear fashion because Cheong's practice did not evolve in a very straightforward way, says Ms Seah, who is also director of arts training and outreach company T.H.E.O. Arts Professionals.

Rather, works with some relation to each other are arranged so the viewer can appreciate the resonances between them.

One part of the exhibition, for example, shows Cheong revisiting the kampung scene several times across the decades, through the lens of cubist-style oil compositions, Chinese ink and colour in the cubist style, abstract impressionism and, possibly, an abstract work of mixed media with aluminum relief on wood.

Ms Seah says: "The iterations seem very different, but you can see

a trend of him experimenting, even with the very same thing – a Balinese woman or a kampung landscape – and sometimes he re-worked and reworked them into so many iterations that it was unrecognisable."

Also on display are works that reflect Cheong's playfulness.

For example, *Pose*, an undated portrait of the artist's wife, features another artist's painting in the background – onto which Cheong stamped his own signature.

"It was very much of the modernist mindset – the artist being very self-conscious," says Ms Seah. "But we don't see that much in the modern artists of South-east Asia, except in Soo Pieng."

STPI's gallery director Rita Targui says the exhibition "aims to give a glimpse into the versatility of this artist, who was not afraid to express a new visual language of his time".

She adds: "I think it will be a good anchor in the Singapore Art Week series of activities and events, which may be more focused on contemporary works and not so much modern ones."

tohwenli@sph.com.sg

VIEW IT / SOO PIENG: MASTER OF COMPOSITION

WHERE: STPI – Creative Workshop & Gallery, 41 Robertson Quay

WHEN: Saturday to March 9, 10am to 7pm (Mondays to Fridays) and 9am to 6pm (Saturdays). Guided tours from Jan 24 at 11.30am (Thursdays) and 2pm (Saturdays). Curator's tours will be available next month and in March. Visit the website for more information.

ADMISSION: Free

INFO: www.stpi.com.sg/exhibitions/soo-pieng-master-of-composition/

BOOK IT / IN TALKS WITH: T.K. SABAPATHY

WHERE: STPI – Creative Workshop & Gallery, 41 Robertson Quay

WHEN: Saturday, 3.30 to 4.30pm

ADMISSION: Free

INFO: Talk by art historian, curator and critic T.K. Sabapathy on Cheong Soo Pieng and his innovative composing processes.

Go to www.stpi.com.sg/programmes/ and www.facebook.com/events/346480982604909/



VIEW IT / PASSING

WHERE: iPreciation, 01-01 HPL House, 50 Cuscaden Road

WHEN: Till Jan 26, 10am to 7pm (Mondays to Fridays) and 11am to 6pm (Saturdays)

ADMISSION: Free

INFO: www.ipreciation.com/passing-a-solo-exhibition-by-vincent-leow/

Artist Vincent Leow with his painting *MERDE-KA* (2018). ST PHOTO: KELVIN CHNG

Merdeka takes on various meanings in paintings

Toh Wen Li

The Malay word for freedom, "Merdeka", has long been used as a rallying cry for independence in Singapore and Malaysia.

Now the word takes centre stage in two new paintings by Singapore artist Vincent Leow, 57, which are on display at a solo show at iPreciation gallery in Cuscaden Road.

The *Last Battle*, made using wax, resin, cotton, graphite and varnish, features part of a speech by Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad after his dramatic comeback in the Malaysia general election last year.

Next to it is a painting whose strawberry-red hues were inspired by a 1965 photo of a Merdeka banner lifting off over Hong Lim Park. The painting, irreverently titled *MERDE-KA* – "merde" being French for "shit" – is filled with definitions of the word "Merdeka".

The word "Merdeka" holds such

fascination for Leow because of its rich associations – suggesting independence, prosperity and freedom from slavery – across various cultural contexts.

Leow's exhibition, titled *Passing*, is a collection of 25 works, mostly paintings, that he created between 2007 and last year. They reflect his sensitivity to current affairs and deal with the idea of loss – which, the artist suggests, could mean anything from death to acts of obfuscation and erasure.

The exhibition runs till Jan 26.

Leow, who teaches at the School of the Arts, was one of the earliest members of contemporary art group The Artists Village.

His works can be found in the collections of the National Gallery Singapore, Singapore Art Museum and the Fukuoka Art Museum.

He was known for his controversial performance art in his younger days. During one show in the early 1990s, he went on stage, urinated into a coffee cup and drank his urine in front of 60 people to show

that life goes in circles and that "what comes from you will eventually come back to you".

While the works displayed at *Passing* might not seem as shocking at first glance, they are provocative in their own way.

More than half of them were created during Leow's time in the United Arab Emirates, where he taught painting at the University of Sharjah from 2008 to 2013. The paintings that emerged from this period were often dark, heavy pieces inspired by events such as the Syrian war and Arab Spring.

When he was in the UAE, Leow's Syrian colleagues and students, who had friends and family in the war-torn country, showed him photos of the war on their mobile phones.

"Some of the images were of torture and abuse... they reminded me of Goya's *The Disasters Of War* series... and how nothing has changed in terms of the brutality of war."

One painting features a sinister hybrid of a man and a wolf with a

severed limb, which is visually echoed in the stump of a tree nearby. Another painting, *Big Bad Wolf*, comprises multiple images – a city in peril, "horned" human figures, a baby, book, candle and an outline of a dog-like creature – layered over one another.

"I see painting as a little bit like making a film," says Leow. "In the past, paintings were 'films'. If you go into the Louvre or into a church, all these (paintings) tell the story of God... we experience storytelling in a painting... In a way, I try to pack everything into one."

In recent years, rows of text – written out letter by letter using stencils – have featured more heavily in his paintings.

"The text opens up new avenues of how to develop the work, and how people can interpret it differently... (But) when (the artist) is manually copying and writing it out, there is 'loss' – typos, or some of it is faded away."

"Meaning is sometimes only a very small part of a painting."

Sparkling evening of baroque delights

REVIEW / CONCERT

AN ITALIAN EXTRAVAGANZA
re:Sound with Enrico Onofri
Victoria Concert Hall
Sunday

Chang Tou Liang

Lovers of baroque music could not have gotten to a better start this year.

The previous weekend's Red Dot Baroque concert was followed by another sparkling evening, this time by re:Sound, Singapore's first professional chamber ensemble.

The scope was wider, covering some 300 years of Italian music. This was led by Italian violinist-conductor Enrico Onofri, well known for his long association with Italian period instrument group Il Giardino Armonico.

The first half was all baroque, opening with Dario Castello's Sonata No. 16 for strings and harpsichord. Serving as palate teaser, the short single-movement work highlighted clear and incisive playing, with Onofri leading by example. Despite the ensemble's small size, there was never any thinness in sound, just precision playing that piqued the ears.

Italy was the birthplace of the sonata and concerto, and home to the world's first violin virtuosos. In concerti grossi by Arcangelo Corelli and Antonio Vivaldi, the solo (concertino) sections were shared by Onofri, who used three different bows, and re:Sound's own players.

In Corelli's Op. 6 No. 4, he was partnered by violinist Seah Huan Yuh and cellist Robert Choi. Throw in two trumpets and there was a feel of festive grandeur.

For Vivaldi's Op. 3 No. 11, violinist Gabriel Lee and cellist Theophilus Tan stepped into the spotlight. In both works, local soloists blended

well with Onofri and were very much his equal. It was then left to him to apply the gilding and ornamentation to his solos, which was spectacular.

There was a cameo by 11-year-old Chloe Chua, Singapore's co-winner of the Menuhin International Violin Competition of 2018, in Winter from Vivaldi's *The Four Seasons*.

Showing the confidence of a seasoned pro, hers was a consummate reading and it was sheer pleasure to watch her being all eyes and ears, completely sympathetic to all of leader Onofri's gestures and nuances. Each of the three movements was preceded by a reading of Vivaldi's sonnet by William Ledbetter.

The hour-long first half was completed by Luigi Boccherini's famous programmatic quintet called *Night Music Of The Streets Of Madrid*. Raucous sounds of a summer's evening (of bells, drums, buskers and bands) were simulated. And with cellos strummed like guitars, a rowdy procession ensued before receding into the distance.

Onofri exchanged his bows for a baton in the second half of Italian music from the Romantic era and early 20th century.

There was some tentative playing in the slow introduction of Rossini's *Overture to La Cenerentola* (Cinderella), but that was soon dispelled in the fast section. Ralph Lim's clarinet solo led the way to a trademark Rossinian crescendo, gradually building up in speed and volume to a rousing climax.

That was followed by the four movements from Respighi's *Ancient Airs And Dances Suite No. 1*, essentially modern orchestrations of old renaissance and baroque tunes.

It was a melodious and enjoyable romp with lively contributions from woodwinds and harp. The applause was loud and vociferous, with the Rossini overture being encored to further delight.



Up close with art and nature for inspiration

Artists who have gone on residencies at local landmarks draw on the experience for their work

Olivia Ho

Walking through poet Yong Shu Hoong's erstwhile workplace, one almost trips over a monitor lizard, which waddles, miffed, into the undergrowth.

The 52-year-old spent six months in 2017 as the resident writer of Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve,

during which he watched migratory birds, spent a night in the reserve and penned a children's story about the huge resident crocodile dubbed "Tail-less" because of its missing appendage.

Sungei Buloh is among a growing number of writing residencies in Singapore where writers are attached to local landmarks – and sometimes given access not granted

to the public – so that they can draw inspiration from them.

National Gallery Singapore recently wrapped up its inaugural poet-in-residence programme with Madeleine Lee, who published a collection, *Regarding*, in November last year based on the eight months she spent in the gallery.

Next up for the position is veteran poet Edwin Thumboo.

Many of the residencies, such as Yong's, come under the umbrella of the National Arts Council's Writers-in-the-Gardens programme, which aims to provide a natural setting for writers to develop their works.

Since 2013, it has placed 12 writers in four green spaces, including the Botanic Gardens and Fort Canning.

Some of these have since born fruit, such as Marc Nair's poetry collection *Vital Possessions*, which was published last year and is partly based on his residency in Gardens by the Bay.

Yong, a self-avowed "city slicker", took up the residency to push himself out of his comfort zone.

Despite putting out collections with titles like *Right Of The Soil* (2018), he has not written much about nature.

Besides visiting once or twice a month and giving public literary tours of the wetland trails, he stayed overnight in a room usually reserved for researchers and accompanied the staff on their morning patrol and night fish surveys.



Vital Possessions (above) was born out of poet Marc Nair's six-month residency at Gardens by the Bay in 2015.

ST PHOTOS: ALPHONSUS CHERN, ARIFFIN JAMAR, ETHOS BOOKS, KHALID BABA, NATIONAL GALLERY SINGAPORE

Reviews

Frank take on a life far from paradise

FICTION
EVENING IN PARADISE: MORE STORIES

By Lucia Berlin
Picador/Hardcover/244 pages/
\$30.94/Books Kinokuniya

★★★★☆

Ho Ai Li

Lucia Berlin lived a colourful life. Her family moved from town to town with her father's job in the mining industry.

After World War II, they moved to Santiago, Chile, where she became fluent in Spanish and socialised with the upper crust of society.

She went through three failed marriages and raised four boys while she struggled with alcoholism. She died in 2004 at age 68.

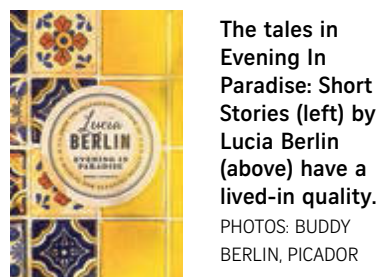
It was only with the publication of *A Manual For Cleaning Women* in 2015 that she won wide recognition for her short stories.

Evening In Paradise, which was published late last year, is a selection from her remaining stories.

Berlin is a writer worth reading for her subject matter alone.

She wrote stories loosely based on her life and these tell of her joy, pain and struggles with tempestuous relationships, alcohol and the stress of making a living from blue-collar jobs.

The stories have a lived-in quality about them, with many set in laundromats, bars and hospitals. Many are also sprinkled with Spanish, reflecting Berlin's background.



The tales in *Evening In Paradise: Short Stories* (left) by Lucia Berlin (above) have a lived-in quality. PHOTOS: BUDDY BERLIN, PICADOR

trying to make ends meet and working through the loss of her husband.

"I finally weep," says the narrator at the end, a construction no less moving as "Jesus wept" in the Bible.

The second collection of Berlin's stories contains fewer standouts; *The Wives* is the most memorable of these stories, being sad and funny at the same time.

Its set-up is a hoot. Two women who were both formerly married to the same man – and who both love their drinks too much – sit down together to drown their sorrows in rum after learning that their former husband is marrying someone else.

Decca imagines their former husband getting intimate with his new love: "He grazes the back of her neck with his lips, leans, chews on her ear, breathing."

Laura spills some of a freshly poured drink down her shirt front. She asks: "He did that to you?"

Another memorable story is *Our Brother's Keeper*, about the guilt a woman feels towards a friend killed in mysterious circumstances.

While *Evening In Paradise* has a few gems of its own, it is better to start with *A Manual For Cleaning Women* for a fuller appreciation of the talent of Berlin.

If you like this, read: *A Manual For Cleaning Women* (Pan Macmillan 2016, \$20.50, Books Kinokuniya), a winsome collection of stories with characters ranging from an eccentric dentist to a jockey, classroom terror to the chief of an Indian tribe.

Love in 200 words

This Valentine's Day, The Straits Times invites you to tell us a love story in miniature

Send us a story about love – true, imagined, funny, sad, yours, anybody's – in 200 words, 200 being the magic number this Bicentennial year. We will publish the best entries on Feb 10.

- All entries must be 200 words or fewer.
- The Straits Times reserves the right to curate, edit and publish the entries at its discretion.
- Entries should not contain profanity or graphic language.

Send your entry to stlife@sph.com.sg by Jan 31 with "LOVE STORY" in the e-mail subject line, along with the following details:

- Your full name as in your NRIC
- Your date of birth
- Your mobile phone number
- Your e-mail address





National Gallery Singapore's inaugural poet-in-residence Madeleine Lee (left) spent eight months in the gallery and the experience has led to the publication of *Regarding* (above), a collection about its exhibitions.



I hope the enjoyment of nature can come across in my writing in subtle ways. The hours of patiently staring at mud hoping to see a shorebird feeding, the small flutter of joy when you do – I hope that is transferred to readers.



POET YONG SHU HOONG (left) on his creative non-fiction book, which is based on his experience as the resident writer of Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve

"You can hear noises more clearly at night," he says. "The birds as well as people doing karaoke at the surrounding farms. And I saw fireflies, which I have not seen since I was young in the kampung."

He is working on a creative non-fiction book tentatively titled *The Unknown Bird*, based on what he calls "life lessons from birds" that he picked up at the reserve.

"I hope the enjoyment of nature can come across in my writing in subtle ways," he says.

"The hours of patiently staring at mud hoping to see a shorebird feeding, the small flutter of joy when you do – I hope that is transferred to readers."

Residencies provide a valuable structure for Lee, 56, who likes to incorporate arcs into her work.

During her gallery residency, which ended a year ago, she visited each of the museum's galleries and exhibitions three to six times, slipping in and out of docent tours and observing other visitors.

Regarding is a collection with an

ekphrastic bent, with sections based on various exhibitions, from 2017's Yayoi Kusama blockbuster show to highlights from the permanent collection such as Gerouette Chen's self-portraits or Low Kway Song's Lynx.

Chua Ek Kay's ink paintings led her to write about her grandmother's life in Telok Ayer, while Raden Saleh's Forest Fire inspired a poem on colonialism and the Dutch East India Company's practice of fencing off the clove forests it wanted and burning the rest.

Lee, who runs a financial services firm, would often see visitors pause, snap a photo of a painting and walk on.

"They're missing out," she says. "I want to share the experience of looking at a painting – everything is a story and if you knew more about the background and history, it adds so much more to appreciating a piece."

"When you sit there, things happen. That's what good art is."

She is something of a residency veteran, having done one in the

Botanic Gardens in 2014 – from which sprang the collection *Flinging The Triplets* – and with a third in the works with the Nature Society (Singapore), which she hopes to do at Sungei Buloh or Chek Jawa.

The downside of an outdoor residency, however, is the tropical heat, as Nair discovered during his residency at Gardens by the Bay for six months in 2015.

The 37-year-old, a 2016 Young Artist Award recipient, visited the gardens once a fortnight to take photos and notes. He also gave a reading and writing workshops to the public.

He got to visit the Cloud Forest, a conservatory with mountain flora and a 35m-high waterfall, at night.

"It was beautiful and also a little creepy," he recalls. "Some of the trees are really old. I felt watched by multiple presences – it was quite intense."

In *Vital Possessions*, he grapples with the notion of the natural in the highly ordered Gardens by the Bay.

He came to see them as a "root

system", their transplantation of exotic trees such as baobabs a parallel to how Singapore brings in foreign talent to take root in the soil of the city state.

"(This residency) has been about eking out little stories, pulling out certain narratives that are otherwise hidden in the foliage."

Next, he hopes to do a residency in a public housing estate, to be given a space in a community centre or a void deck.

"The artist could be given a brief to create something that would impact the community – an art installation, a music showcase, work that is about the estate and resonates with residents."

oliviaho@sph.com.sg

• *Vital Possessions* (\$18) is available at Books Kinokuniya; and *Regarding* (\$23.54) is available at Gallery & Co at the National Gallery Singapore.

• Follow Olivia Ho on Instagram @ohomatopoeia

Raw yet loving tribute to books

NON-FICTION PULP II: A VISUAL BIBLIOGRAPHY OF THE BANISHED BOOK

By Shubigi Rao
Rock Paper Fire/Paperback/
400 pages/\$50 before GST/
Books Kinokuniya, BooksActually, Objectifs
★★★★☆

Olivia Ho

This book says it is a bibliography, but there is really no point trying to categorise it.

It is the sophomore volume to come out of Pulp, India-born Singaporean artist Shubigi Rao's decade-long project on book destruction, which she began in 2014 and which has been garnering attention and acclaim of late.

Last year, she won the Jurors' Choice Award at the APB Foundation Signature Art Prize for the first portion of the work. *Pulp I: A Short Biography Of The Banished Book* (2016) was also shortlisted for the Singapore Literature Prize.

Parts of Pulp – including the two volumes – are on show at the National Museum of Singapore in *Unhomed Belongings*, an exhibition of Rao's works alongside those of American actress Lucy Liu's.

The Pulp books defy definition. Art book, archive, academic text or artefact? Pulp I ambled along with Borge-

sian blitheness and little care for category, which made for an intriguing, if at times frustrating, read.

Pulp II is more focused, training its lens on those on the frontlines of saving books: the caretakers of rare volumes, the translators of lost texts, the librarians contesting the censorship of their collections.

What comes across is the enormous task that is the transmission of knowledge, hindered by a decay that would be obstacle enough without throwing humanity's awful tendency towards violence in the mix.

Rao probes the tension between the book as object and the book as symbol. In one interview, the curator of Antwerp's Hendrik Conscience Library reflects on the conundrum of ancient books so fragile that reading them would ruin them.

"It's disappearing slowly, we can't do anything to save it," he says. "We can't show it to people outside of this room and we can't allow people to enter this room. So why are we keeping it? It's kind of a metaphysical object."

A particular tragedy that runs through the book like a mineral seam is the burning of Vijećnica, the national library of Sarajevo, which was destroyed by shelling in 1992.

Rao returns over and over again to that scene through interviews with witnesses: the firefighters battling flames from incendiary bombs and the librarians and civilians who

braved sniper fire to run in and save the library's nearly two million books.

One librarian, Aida Buturovic, was killed by shrapnel. Most of the collection was destroyed; what was saved still remains unhoused today.

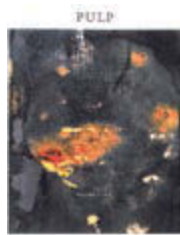
Rao's primary interest is documentation and it is this that drives the book, rather than narrative structure. Yet her bibliophilia is palpable in these pages, especially in the loving close-up shots of faded script, yellowed pages and books with bullet holes in them.

This rambling tome is at times wonderfully esoteric – a section

called *An Imprecise Indexical* is full of abstract drawings – and at times raw and sad, ever incomplete.

It is perhaps best read not as a single journey, cover to cover, but as if one were wandering shelf to shelf in a library, aware always of one's insurmountable ignorance of all the evanescent knowledge in the world.

If you like this, read: *The Library Book* by Susan Orlean (Simon & Schuster, 2018, \$49.22, Books Kinokuniya), an unusual investigation into the unsolved mystery of the catastrophic 1986 Los Angeles Public Library fire.



Pulp II: A Visual Bibliography Of The Banished Book (above) by Shubigi Rao (left) highlights those on the frontlines of saving books.

PHOTOS: KATHRIN LEISCH, ROCK PAPER FIRE

Bestsellers

FICTION

1. (2) *Crazy Rich Asians* by Kevin Kwan
2. (1) *The Next Person You Meet In Heaven* by Mitch Albom
3. (3) *Rich People Problems* by Kevin Kwan
4. (4) *The Travelling Cat Chronicles* by Hiro Arikawa
5. (5) *China Rich Girlfriend* by Kevin Kwan
6. (10) *Fire And Blood* by George R.R. Martin
7. (-) *Milkman* by Anna Burns
8. (6) *The Five People You Meet In Heaven* by Mitch Albom
9. (8) *Assassin's Creed Odyssey* by Gordon Doherty
10. (7) *Tuesdays With Morrie* by Mitch Albom

NON-FICTION

1. (1) *Becoming* by Michelle Obama
2. (3) *The Subtle Art Of Not Giving A F*ck* by Mark Manson
3. (-) *When Breath Becomes Air* by Paul Kalanithi
4. (8) *21 Lessons For The 21st Century* by Yuval Noah Harari
5. (5) *Billion Dollar Whale* by Tom Wright and Bradley Hope
6. (9) *Love For Imperfect Things* by Haemin Sunim
7. (2) *This Is What Inequality Looks Like* by Teo You Yenn
8. (6) *Tall Order* by Peh Shing Huei
9. (4) *Brief Answers To The Big Questions* by Stephen Hawking
10. (7) *The Art Of Thinking Clearly* by Rolf Dobelli

CHILDREN'S

1. (1) *Dog Man #6: Brawl Of The Wild* by Dav Pilkey
2. (2) *Diary Of A Wimpy Kid: The Meltdown* by Jeff Kinney
3. (3) *Dog Man #5: Lord Of The Fleas* by Dav Pilkey
4. (7) *Roblox Top Adventure Games* by Egmont
5. (4) *Dork Diaries #13: Tales From A Not-So-Happy Birthday* by Rachel Renee Russell
6. (9) *Disney Wreck-It Ralph 2* by Bonnier
7. (5) *Fantastic Beasts: The Crimes Of Grindelwald - The Original Screenplay* by J.K. Rowling
8. (6) *The Ice Monster* by David Walliams
9. (8) *Geronimo Stilton #70: The Phantom Bandit* by Geronimo Stilton
10. (10) *Diary Of A Wimpy Kid: The Getaway* by Jeff Kinney

• This is The Straits Times' compilation of bestseller lists from Books Kinokuniya, Times, WHSmith and Popular bookstores.



ST PHOTO: ERNEST LUIS

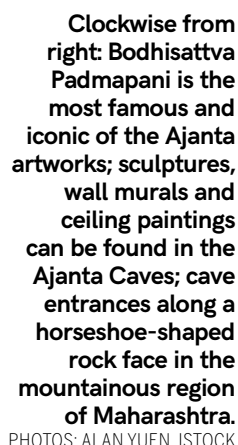
Zombies and SSO's 40th birthday gala

Tune in to ST podcast Life Picks, where Life reporters highlight the best films, concerts, restaurants and arts events.

This week, Life reporters (above from left) Yip Wai Yee, Melissa Sim and Akshita Nanda chat about low-budget Japanese zombie movie *One Cut Of The Dead*, which is part of the Japanese Film Festival, and the Singapore Symphony Orchestra's 40th anniversary gala.

SCAN TO WATCH
<https://bit.ly/2FozOqf>





Alan Yuen explores ancient cave paintings and holy sites in India

However, as I experienced on my recent visit to several sites, a little patience and effort to read up about each destination goes a long way. More than making sure whatever my guide did not fly over my head, it brought each place to life, opening up portals to the fascinating worlds of bygone eras.

After hiking up over a hundred steps or more, I finally reached the caves. It would have been an easier climb if it was not such a steep climb. I was rewarded for the effort, for the reward was a panoramic view of the cave entrances along a 550m horseshoe-shaped rock face.

Lutting out from an undulating hillside with dense foliage, it was not difficult to imagine how the forest led to the world over 200 millennia. Although there was some sunlight streaming in through the entrance of the caves, it was pitch dark deeper inside. Armed with a torchlight, I ventured further in to explore the vast space within.

The cave consisted of an ornately carved veranda, but the entrance to the sanctuary an architectural feat given that they were cut from rock with only a hammer and chisel.

Above: Participants of the International Buddhist Conclave 2018 at the Mahabodhi Mahavihara temple complex in Bihar. Left: The Dharmarajika Stupa was demolished for its bricks to build a bazaar in the 18th century.

My guide shared the ancient stories depicted on the murals on the walls as we passed them. He pointed out the Bodhisattva Padmapani located at Cave 1, the most famous and iconic of the Ajanta artworks. It depicts a bodhisattva, Avalokitesvara, also known as Guanyin to Asian Buddhists.

Once I got inside the complex, the hectic atmosphere faded quickly away in the calm and quiet environment. Monks from all around the world — identified by the colour of their robes from ochre, bright orange to pristine white — lay prostrate in deep prayer. Others recited mantras, keeping count using prayer beads.

This tiny town in the north-eastern state of Bihar is one of the most holy sites in Buddhism. It was said to be where Prince Siddhartha attained enlightenment beneath a bodhi tree and became a Buddha more than 2,600 years ago.

The writer's trip was sponsored by India Tourism, as part of the International Buddhist Conclave 2018.

I flew to Indira Gandhi International Airport in Delhi via Air India. The closest airport to the Ajanta caves is Aurangabad, a two-hour flight from Delhi. For the Mahabodhi Mahavihara temple, Bodhi Gaya is also a two-hour flight away. Factor in plenty of time for car transfers as traffic can be slow. Hire a car to get around for convenience.

■ Set aside four hours to fully explore the Ajanta caves. If you have an extra day, head to the nearby Ellora Caves, another world heritage site. The best time to visit is in winter, from December to February, where cool weather will make exploring the caves more pleasant. Be sure to wear shoes that you can slip in and out of easily – you will have to take them off before entering the caves.

■ You cannot bring mobile phones into the Mahabodhi Mahavihara temple complex. If you intend to take photos, you may have to pay a nominal fee to bring in a camera.

Terms and conditions apply. You can also call 6212-9590 or visit Sale.ChanBrothers.com to make bookings and enquiries

Today, the Unesco World Heritage site comprises 300 caves, wall murals, and a large complex of rock art. Considered an iconic prehistoric architecture.

After hiking up to the cave entrance, I finally reached a humid afternoon. The cave entrance was a shoe-shaped rock formation. Jutting out from a dense foliage, it was how the caves were built millennia. Although the stream was flowing through the caves, it was pitch dark. With a torchlight, I explored the vast space of the cave. The cave consisted of a large hall, a small architectural feature, and a rock with only a few

He pointed out the Bodhisattva Padmapani located at Cave 1, the most famous and iconic of the Ajanta artworks. It depicts a Bodhisattva, Avalokitesvara, also known as Guanyin to Asian Buddhists.

Peace at Bodhi Gaya

Outside the Mahabodhi Mahavihara temple complex, traffic is gridlocked. Tour buses, tuk-tuks and motorbikes jostle for occupancy openings and honk on their way up the narrow stretch of road leading to its entrance.

Once I got inside the complex, the hectic atmosphere faded quickly away in the calm and quiet environment. Monks from all around the world — dressed by the colour of their robes from ochre, bright orange to pristine white — lay prostrate in deep prayer. Others recited mantras, keeping count using prayer beads.

Even camera-toting tourists observed the scene with hushed reverence. And understandably so.

This tiny town in the north-eastern state of Bihar is one of the most holy sites in Buddhism. It was said to be where Prince Siddhartha attained enlightenment beneath a bodhi tree and became a Buddha more than 2,600 years ago.

In fact, the bodhi tree — believed to be a direct descendant of the one Buddha sat

[illegible]

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7D Majestic Rajasthan With Taj Mahal

Dep: Jan - Sep
fr **\$1248**

7D Gujarat - Jewel in the West

Dep: Jan - May
fr **\$1798**

10D Buddhist Trails & Varanasi

Dep: Jan - Sep
fr **\$1448**

All prices are subjected to associated taxes & surcharges correct at time of print & subject to change. *\$0 ~ \$550

*Selected tours & departures; conditions apply. While stocks last.
All information is given as best estimate at time of notice.

D&G unveils Italian oomph in Milan

For Milan Fashion Week, the label showcased quirky styles in its first catwalk after China fiasco

MILAN • The founders of Italian fashion house Dolce & Gabbana (D&G) mixed checks, furry gloves and shimmering dressing gown-style coats last Saturday at Milan Fashion Week, branding it Italian oomph.

Domenico Dolce and Stefano Gabbana were making their first presentation after D&G was forced to apologise to Chinese customers in November last year, for posting on Instagram short clips showing a Chinese woman eating pizza, spaghetti and a cannoli with chopsticks that some deemed culturally insensitive. The uproar escalated when Gabbana allegedly used poop emojis to describe China and hurled insults at the country and its people.

But the pair steered clear of controversy at their Autumn-Winter 2019-2020 collection named Eleganza, or Elegance in Italian.

The backdrop oozed 1930s Berlin decadence with giant red curtains, jazz and a master of ceremonies (shades of Joel Grey) re-creating the ambience of Cabaret (1972). But to highlight Italy's mastery of cloth, an atelier was also re-created with tailors and fitters taking measure-

ments and cutting and stitching as the models walked up and down the ramp.

Models showcased quirky styles, teaming tailcoats with plaid trousers, matador suits with sparkling bow ties and a ginger velvet suit with black lapels.

D&G did not skimp on Hollywood-level glamour incorporating colours such as midnight blue, burgundy and deep purple.

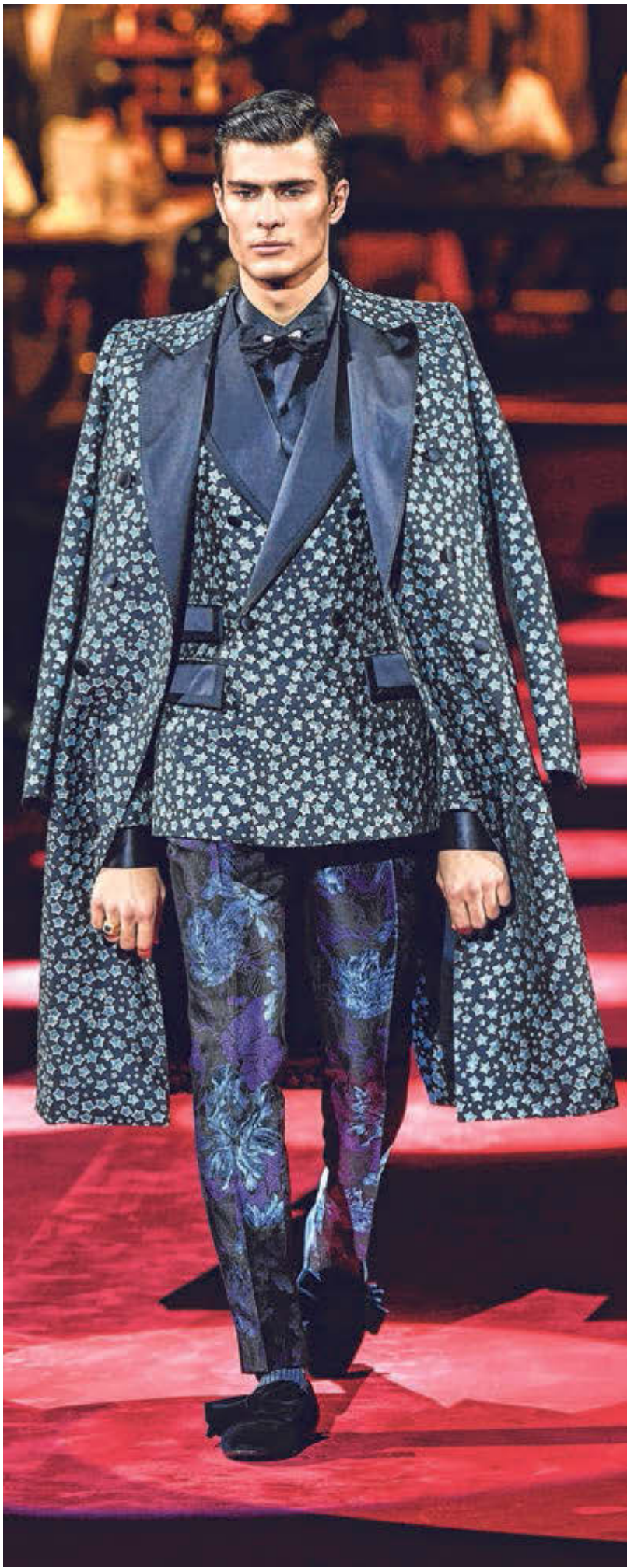
Although there were some Chinese people at the show, Chinese online retailers are boycotting D&G despite a public apology in which Dolce and Gabbana capped a one-minute-30-second mea culpa by saying "sorry" in Mandarin in an attempt to salvage their reputation in the world's most important luxury market.

"Our families always taught us to respect different cultures across the world and because of this, we want to ask for your forgiveness if we have made mistakes in interpreting yours," Dolce said in Italian.

"We want to say sorry to all Chinese people across the world, of which there are many, and we are taking this apology and message very seriously," Gabbana added.

The Chinese-subtitled video was posted on Weibo, the popular Chinese Twitter-like social media platform where they have close to one million followers.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE



Dolce & Gabbana presented its Autumn-Winter 2019-2020 collection, named Eleganza, last Saturday. PHOTOS: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Documentary series embraces fashion as an art form

Robin Givhan

A generic grey flannel suit epitomised the tradition-bound 1950s.

The 1940s war effort was made personal by women's stingily crafted dresses – cut so as to leave ample fabric for uniforms, parachutes and everything else needed during World War II.

Fashion has always reflected social change. But over the last few years, its symbolism, its intellectual resonance and its joyous verve have been enjoying newfound respect.

Now, fashion gets its own four-part docu-series on CNN.

American Style began on Sunday with two episodes and will conclude next Sunday. The cable news channels has turned its attention to fashion as a way of exploring the decades from the 1940s to now.

American Style zips through fashion history, pausing along the way to draw connections between zoot suits and racism, miniskirts and sex, Sunday bests and the American civil-rights movement.

Much of this is well-covered ground: Woodstock, Rosie the Riveter and so on. But American Style is distinguished by its breadth and the way in which one trend is shown to lead to another as a result of the shifting cultural ground.

The show removes fashion from a vacuum and reveals the way in which it functions more broadly.

The producers do not delve deeply into any one stylish moment. They give the viewer a buffet of 1940s shoulders, Paris sophistication, Garment District grime and a good bit of fashion public relations.

The result is a lively presentation of style history that relies on news clips, old Hollywood films, a full stable of expert talking heads and a

handful of famous faces thrown in for good measure.

The producers manage to add nuance to their bullet points.

The 1970s disco era, for example, drawing from gay nightclub culture and black music, was a time of sexual freedom and individualism. It was tamped down by chants of "disco sucks" and bonfires fuelled by vinyl recordings.

As a society, people have all become more attuned to the revelatory nature of fashion.

They scan a crowd of politicians for white-clothed women who might be part of the resistance. Hollywood's stars walked the red carpet cloaked in black to protest sexual harassment. The hoodie is as fraught a piece of sportswear as there has ever been. It is a uniform for soccer parents, a marker of Silicon Valley disruption and an instigator of people's fear of young men of colour.

After being considered a poor relation to the fine arts, fashion exhibitions have been welcomed into countless museums and galleries: The Denver Art Museum explored the history of Dior.

Across the United States, designers such as Yves Saint Laurent, Isabel Toledo, Stephen Burrows and Isaac Mizrahi have been given a critical examination.

A look at the relationship between fashion and the Catholic Church drew record crowds to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. And the National Museum of Women in the Arts mounted a retrospective on Rodarte.

The scope and depth of these exhibitions vary widely, but the salient point is that they exist at all. For generations, fashion was not welcome in the world of Rembrandt and

Monet. It was an interloper.

Film-makers have turned their lens to fashion as well.

Documentarians have done deep dives on the rise and fall – and rise again – of the New York-based designer Zac Posen. Netflix explored the controlled chaos that precedes a Chanel haute couture show for its series, 7 Days Out.

Fashion has always spoken volumes about who people are.

But the industry has had a rocky relationship to the outside world.

Hollywood tends to caricature designers rather than present them as complicated, creative entrepreneurs. Even the much-lauded film Phantom Thread (2017) relied on the trope of the designer as tortured narcissist.

CNN also has a history of reporting on the fashion industry, most notably when Style With Elsa Klensch taught a generation of fashion fans

about how designers selected their palettes and the difference between jacquard and brocade.

But television tends to turn its eye to fashion sporadically: when a famous designer dies, when a first lady debuts an inaugural gown, when scandals break.

Sustained attention to fashion, in the same way that the general media keeps its eyes on sports or technology, has been rare.

There are gatekeepers who determine what is included under the category of "culturally significant". They have been hesitant to give fashion entry.

Fashion has always connected people in a global web of aspirations and dreams. Individuals have always known that to be true. Now, the film-makers and academics who tell stories and write history are ready to acknowledge it.

WASHINGTON POST

thenewpaper

Biker Boy

Hit the open road and explore life on two wheels

tnp.sg/lifestyle

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BABY BLUES



GARFIELD



Free to air

CHANNEL 5

AM
6.00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 15 (HD) (PG) (V)
6.40 Just For Laughs Gags 17 (HD) (V)
7.00 First Look Asia (Simulcast From CNA) (CA)
9.00 The Dr Oz Show 10 (PG) (IE)
10.00 The \$100,000 Pyramid (HD) (V)
10.30 Everyday Gourmet 3 (HD) (IE)
11.00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 16 (PG) (V)
PM
12.00 Martha Bakes 6 (IE)
12.30 Secret Meat Business (IE)
1.00 Wheel Of Fortune 36 (CC) (V)
1.30 Kin (PG) (CC) (D)
2.00 Phua Chu Kang Pte Ltd 4 (SC)
2.30 Euromaxx (PG) (Cul)
3.00 The Dr Oz Show 10 (IE)
4.00 Meet The MP (HD) (PG) (SC)
4.30 America's Got Talent 12 (HD) (PG) (V)
5.30 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 16 (PG) (V)
6.30 Divided (US) (HD) (PG) (V)
7.00 Wheel Of Fortune 36 (CC) (V)
7.30 Tricked (Canada) (HD) (PG) (CC) (V)
8.00 The Carbonaro Effect 4 (PG) (CC) (V)
8.30 Kin (PG) (CC) (D)
9.00 News 5 (HD)
9.30 FAM (HD) (PG) (SC)
10.00 The Lion Men (PG) (M)
AM
12.30 Kin (PG) (CC) (D)
1.00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 16 (PG) (V)
1.45 This Is Us (HD) (PG) (D)
2.30 Grimm 5 (HD) (PG13) (D)
3.20 Everyday Gourmet 3 (HD) (IE)
3.50 Martha Bakes 6 (IE)
4.15 Secret Meat Business (IE)
4.40 The \$100,000 Pyramid (HD) (V)
5.10 The Dr Oz Show 10 (PG) (IE)

CHANNEL 8

AM
6.00 What's In The Fridge? (HD) (V)
7.00 Kids In Charge (V)
7.30 Hello Singapore Highlights (News)
8.00 Heart To Heart (PG) (CC) (D)
9.00 Morning Express (News)
9.30 Jalan Jalan (PG) (CC) (D)
10.00 Are You Up For It? (V)
10.30 Night Market Life Aka Life (PG) (D)

PM
12.30 Food Moments (HD) (CC) (IE)
1.00 News 8 At One (HD) (News)
1.30 118 (PG) (CC) (D)
2.00 Train Your Brain (HD) (S)
2.30 Your Hand In Mine (HD) (CC) (D)
3.30 The Golden Path (CC) (D)
4.30 Taste Of Life (PG) (D)
5.30 118 Reunion (PG) (CC) (D)
6.30 Hello Singapore (News)
7.30 Jalan Jalan (PG) (CC) (D)
8.00 Emergency! (CC) (V)
8.30 Tuesday Report – Ninety Years Young (CC) (IE)
9.00 Heart To Heart (PG) (CC) (D)
10.00 News Tonight (HD)
10.30 Stay Healthy Stay Happy 2017 (IE)
11.00 Princess Agents (PG) (D)
AM
12.00 The Princess Weiyoung (PG) (D)
1.00 Wonderful World 13 (V)
2.00 A Time To Dance (D)
4.00 A Place Called Home (PG) (D)

CHANNEL U

PM
3.00 Taiwan 1001 Stories (IE)
4.00 Taste From Home (CC) (IE)
5.00 Cheongdamdong Scandal (PG) (CC) (D)
6.00 The Menu (PG) (CC) (D)
7.00 You Are The Only One (PG) (CC) (D)
9.00 Food Secrets (CC) (IE)
10.00 Brother's Keeper 2 (PG13) (CC) (D)
11.00 News Tonight
11.30 Food Secrets (CC) (IE)
AM
12.30 You Are The Only One (PG) (CC) (D)
2.30 Close

CNA

AM
6.00 Singapore Tonight
7.00 First Look Asia
9.00 Asia Business First
10.02 Law Of The Land
11.00 News Now
PM
1.02 Why It Matters 2
2.00 News Now
4.02 Law Of The Land
5.00 News Now
7.02 Why It Matters 2 (CC)
8.00 Primetime Asia

9.02 Real Deal (CC)
10.00 Singapore Tonight
11.02 Why It Matters 2
AM
12.00 News Now
12.30 Power List Asia 6
1.02 Real Deal
2.00 News Now
2.30 The Successors 5
3.02 Law Of The Land
4.00 News Now
4.30 Millionaire Minds
5.02 Real Deal
Programmes may be pre-empted by breaking news

VASANTHAM

AM
7.00 Thein Amuthu 2015
8.00 Shrestam – Sri OS Arun S (Classical Music) (V)
8.30 Ha Ha Ha Sriippu 2018 (V)
9.00 Vasantam Gold: Thai Pirandhal Vazhi Pirakkum
PM
12.00 Sa Re Ga Mae 2016 (V)
12.30 Ha Ha Ha Sriippu 2017 (V)
1.00 Tamil Talkies: Singaravelan
4.00 Sa Re Ga Mae 2016 (V)
4.30 Ponguthae Enbamae (Pongal Special) (IE)
5.00 Navarasa Kondattam 2 (Pongal Special) (V)
6.30 OK Kanmani (Pongal Special) – Thai Pongal Kanmani (S)
7.00 Vidumurai Vasantam 2 (V)
8.00 Uyire (PG) (D)
8.30 Tamil Seithi (News)
9.00 Tamil Silver Screen: Bhaskar Oru Rascal
AM
12.00 Tamil Seithi (Encore) (News)
12.30 Close

OKTO

AM
9.00 Twirlywoos (P)
9.30 Teddies (P)
10.00 Doki (P)
10.30 Sesame Street (HD) (P)
11.00 Dora The Explorer (HD) (P)
11.30 Andy's Prehistoric Adventures (P)
PM
12.00 Bugsville (P)

12.30 Teddies (IE)
1.00 Coconut The Little Dragon (P)
1.30 Twirlywoos (P)
2.00 Doki (P)
2.30 Sesame Street (HD) (P)
3.00 Dora The Explorer (HD) (P)
3.30 Andy's Prehistoric Adventures (P)
4.00 All Over The Workplace (S)
4.30 Captain Flinn And The Pirate Dinosaurs (S)
5.00 Littlest Pet Shop (S)
5.30 Grizzly & The Lemmings (S)
6.00 The Lion Guard (S)
6.30 Museum Mysteries (S)
7.00 My Little Pony: Friendship Is Magic (CC) (S)
7.30 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles (HD) (S)
8.00 Star Wars Rebels (HD) (CC) (S)
8.30 Inazuma Eleven (CC) (S)
9.00 BWF Grand Prix – Scottish Open 2018 (Sports)
11.00 American Ninja Warrior 6 (HD) (PG) (Sports)
AM
12.00 Close

SURIA

PM
3.00 Juxbox Ekspres
4.00 Seindah Takdir Cinta (PG) (D)
5.00 Mak Cun 4 (PG) (CC) (D)
6.00 Cickaman Siri Animasi (S)
6.30 Kelana Rasa (CC) (IE)
7.00 Teratai Kemboja (PG) (CC) (D)
8.00 Berita (HD) (News)
8.30 Kek Champion (CC) (V)
9.30 Rintihan Hati (PG) (CC) (D)
10.30 Alam Maya (PG) (CC) (D)
11.30 Berita (HD) (News) (R)
AM
12.00 Close

C: Children; CA: Current Affairs; CC: Closed Captions; Cul: Culture; D: Drama; IE: Info-Ed; M: Movies; P: Preschool; PG: Parental Guidance; R: Repeat; S: Schoolkids; SC: Sitcom; V: Variety

Programme schedules correct at time of printing. Telecast details from Mediacorp, StarHub and Singtel TV. For pay TV updates, go to www.starhub.com/tv or www.singtelv.com.sg

4.00 The Flash 3
4.50 Supergirl 2
5.40 Top 20 Funniest
6.30 The Flash 3
7.20 The Big Bang Theory 9
7.45 Friends 9
8.10 Breaking The Magician's Code
9.00 In The Heart Of The Sea
11.15 The Big Bang Theory 9
11.40 Friends 9

COMEDY CENTRAL ASIA (HD) (CHANNEL 324)

AM
6.25 The Daily Show 24
6.50 Just For Laughs Gags 10
7.15 Kids Do The Craziest Things
7.40 Mr Bean
8.10 Your Face or Mine 4
8.35 Most Ridiculous 2
9.00 Billy On The Street 5
9.20 Takeshi's Castle 4
9.45 Mr Bean
10.15 Most Ridiculous 2
10.40 Almost Royals 2
11.10 Saturday Night Live 43
11.55 The Daily Show 24
PM
12.20 Jeff Goldblum Basic Bro
1.10 Just For Laughs Gags 14
1.35 Inside Comedy 2
2.35 Mr Bean
3.05 Takeshi's Castle 4
3.30 Most Ridiculous Asia With N.O.C
3.55 Almost Royals 2
4.20 Lip Sync Battle 4
5.10 Hood Adjacent With James Davis
5.35 The Jim Jefferies Show
6.00 The Daily Show 24
6.25 Above Average Presents
6.40 Your Face Or Mine 4
7.00 Most Ridiculous 2
7.25 Billy On The Street 5
7.55 Takeshi's Castle 4
8.20 Just For Laughs Gags 14
8.50 Caraoke Showdown
9.15 Above Average Presents
9.20 Stand-up, Asia!
9.50 Above Average Presents
9.55 Stand-up, Asia!
10.25 Above Average Presents
10.30 Inside Amy Schumer
10.50 The Fuccons
11.00 The Jim Jefferies Show
11.25 The Fuccons
11.30 The Daily Show 24

JIA LE (HD) (CHANNEL 502)

AM
7.00 First Love
8.00 Entrepreneurial Age
9.00 Eagle And Youngster
10.00 100% Wife
PM
12.10 First Love
1.00 In The Name Of Love
2.00 100% Wife
4.10 Entrepreneurial Age
5.00 First Love
6.00 In The Name Of Love
7.00 100% Wife
9.10 First Love
10.00 Entrepreneurial Age
11.00 Eagle And Youngster

StarHub TV

HISTORY (CHANNEL 401)

AM
8.30 The Pickers 11
9.30 History Drama: Vikings 5
10.25 The Cars That Made America
PM
12.15 Swamp People 9
1.10 Counting Cars 5
2.05 Pawn Stars 18
2.35 Storage Wars: Texas 6
3.00 Storage Wars 10
3.30 History Drama: Vikings 5
4.25 The Cars That Made America
6.15 The Pickers 11
7.10 Pawn Stars 19
8.05 Storage Wars: Texas 6
8.30 Storage Wars 10
9.00 Storage Wars 12
9.25 Storage Wars 11
9.55 Forged In Fire 3
10.50 Mountain Men 7
11.45 Football's Greatest Moments

LIFETIME (CHANNEL 514)

AM
8.00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 16
9.00 Scraps
10.00 Who Runs The World With Mongchin
11.00 Zoo 3
PM
12.00 Dance Moms 6
1.00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 16
2.00 The Wrong Student
3.35 Leah Remini: Scientology & The Aftermath
4.30 Live PD Presents: Women On Patrol
5.00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 16
6.00 Man Vs Child: Chef Showdown
7.00 Little Women LA: Terra's Little Family
7.30 Married At First Sight Australia 4
9.00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 16
10.00 Mommy, I Didn't Do It
11.35 Man Vs Child: Chef Showdown

HBO (CHANNEL 601)

AM
6.35 Anger Management
8.20 The Haunted Mansion
9.45 Bleed For This (NC16)
11.35 Collateral Beauty
PM
1.15 Phantom Thread
3.20 Jack
5.10 Daddy Day Care
6.40 Robin Hood
7.00 12 Strong (NC16)
11.05 211 (NC16)

CINEMAX (CHANNEL 611)

AM
6.00 Biker Boyz
7.50 Basic Instinct (NC16)
9.45 Batman And Harley Quinn
11.00 Rock Star
PM
12.45 Tango One (NC16)
2.35 Things We Lost In The Fire
4.30 The Skulls 2
6.10 We're No Angels (1989)

8.00 Copycat (NC16)
10.00 The Brits Are Coming! (NC16)
11.30 Strike Back 3 (M18)

HUB E CITY (CHANNEL 825)

AM
6.00 Destiny By Love
7.00 Tomorrow With You (HD)
8.15 Hot Door Night 15 (HD)
9.15 Dowry (HD)
10.15 Perfect Dating 6 (HD)
11.45 Hong Kong Neighbourhood Gems (HD)
PM
12.15 The Gentlemen Of Wolgyesu Tailor Shop (HD)
1.30 Tomorrow With You (HD)
2.45 Hot Door Night 11
3.45 The Doctor (HD)
4.45 The Gentlemen Of Wolgyesu Tailor Shop (HD)
6.00 Dowry (HD)
7.00 Hot Door Night 15 (HD)
8.00 Viva La Romance (HD)
9.30 Gourmet Guides (HD)
10.00 The King's Woman (HD)
11.00 Hot Door Night 15 (HD)

HUB SPORTS 1 (CHANNEL 201)

AM
6.00 Multi Sport: Action Sports World 2018
7.00 Snooker: World Championship 2018 International Highlights Semi-finals 1
10.30 Snooker: World Championship 2018 International Highlights Semi-finals 2
PM
2.00 Tennis: ATP 250 Tata Open Maharashtra 2019 Semi-finals
6.30 FEI Equestrian World 2018
7.00 Motorsports: 2018 Monster Energy FIM Speedway Of Nations Race Off 1: Teterow, Germany Highlights
8.00 Cycling: 2018 Shanghai Criterium By Le Tour De France Highlights
9.00 Volleyball Nations League 2018 Women Final Rounds – Semi-finals 2 (USA Vs China)

HUB SPORTS 2 (CHANNEL 202)

AM
6.00 Magazine: Spartan Barcelona 2018
6.30 Magazine: Omnisport.TV
7.00 Asean Basketball League 2018/19 San Miguel Alab Pilipinas Vs Hong Kong Eastern
9.00 Wrestling: WWE Raw (PG13) (Live)
PM
12.00 Magazine: Omnisport.TV
12.30 Asean Basketball League 2018/19 Formosa Dreamers Vs San Miguel Alab Pilipinas
2.30 Football: Coppa Italia 2018/19 Round Of 16 Cagliari Vs Atalanta
4.30 Wrestling: WWE Experience (PG)
5.30 National Basketball League Round 13 Adelaide 36ers Vs Brisbane Bullets
7.30 Magazine: Omnisport.TV
8.00 Wrestling: WWE This Week (PG)
8.30 Football: The EFL Highlights 2018/19
9.00 The Football Review
9.30 Football: Coppa Italia 2018/19 Round Of 16 Roma Vs Virtus Entella
11.30 Magazine: Omnisport.TV

Singtel TV

CARTOON NETWORK (CHANNEL 226)

AM
7.00 The Tom And Jerry Show
8.00 Teen Titans Go!
9.00 Grizzy And The Lemmings
9.30 The Tom And Jerry Show
10.00 We Bare Bears
10.30 Supernobots
11.00 The Powerpuff Girls
PM
12.00 Teen Titans Go!
1.00 We Bare Bears
2.00 Ninjago: Masters Of Spinjitzu
2.30 The Powerpuff Girls
3.00 Running Man Animation
3.30 Craig Of The Creek
4.00 We Bare Bears
4.30 The Powerpuff Girls
5.00 Teen Titans Go!
5.30 Ben 10
6.00 Oggy & The Cockroaches
6.30 Running Man Animation
7.00 The Tom And Jerry Show
7.30 Grizzy And The Lemmings
8.00 We Bare Bears
9.00 The Powerpuff Girls
10.00 Regular Show
10.30 Steven Universe
11.00 Clarence
11.30 Adventure Time

AXN (HD) (CHANNEL 304)

AM
6.45 Kicking & Screaming
7.30 The Blacklist 5
8.15 MacGyver
9.00 American Ninja Warrior 8
9.50 Killjoys 3
10.40 Caught On Camera With Nick Cannon 2
11.30 Kicking & Screaming
PM
12.20 MacGyver
1.10 Quantico 2
2.00 American Ninja Warrior 8
2.50 Killjoys 3
3.40 The Blacklist 5
4.30 American Ninja Warrior 8
5.20 Hawaii Five-0 9
6.10 Kicking & Screaming
7.05 The Karate Kid (2010)
9.45 The Blacklist 6
10.35 Instinct
11.25 The Blacklist 6

WARNER TV (HD) (CHANNEL 306)

AM
6.50 Top 20 Funniest
7.40 Major Crimes
8.30 Supergirl 2
9.20 The Flash 3
10.10 iZombie 4
11.00 Breaking The Magician's Code
11.50 300: Rise Of An Empire
PM
1.30 The Big Bang Theory 9
1.55 Friends 9
2.20 iZombie 4
3.10 Breaking The Magician's Code

TheStarsSay

Aries (March 21 - April 19)
Push your viewpoint hard, but also be diplomatic about it. See if your people can back you up.

Taurus (April 20 - May 20)
Are you looking for romance? Now is the time for you to step up and get yourself noticed.

Gemini (May 21 - June 20)
Conversation is everything. But writing is not the same, so see if you can contact people more directly.

Cancer (June 21 - July 22)
Try something totally original – you can make really interesting things happen if you make the effort.

Leo (July 23 - Aug 22)
Your big heart is open to all. It is one of those days you have a lot to give.

Virgo (Aug 23 - Sept 22)
Things are much clearer now, but make sure other folks are in the know. You need help to play detective.

Libra (Sept 23 - Oct 22)
You have one trick left up your sleeve to help boost your income. Go for it – the odds are on your side.

Scorpio (Oct 23 - Nov 21)
Things are heating up. That is great if you are with a loved one, but it can also be something difficult.

Sagittarius (Nov 22 - Dec 21)
Something that seemed unimportant recently should stand out as a very big deal.

Capricorn (Dec 22 - Jan 19)
You are bursting with creative energy. Sneak away from your obligations and make art or write a song.

Aquarius (Jan 20 - Feb 18)
You feel slow and sleepy and that could mean you are finding it harder than usual to pay attention.

Pisces (Feb 19 - March 20)
You feel more relaxed, so see if you can soften your tone and get your people to mellow out with you.

• Provided by Astrology.com (www.astrology.com)

Radio

KISS92

AM
6.00 Maddy, Jason & Arnold In The Morning
10.00 Carol Smith
PM
1.00 Charmaine Yee
4.00 Shan Wee
8.00 Josh's Goodnight Kiss

ONE FM 91.3

AM
6.00 ONE FM's #1 Breakfast Show With Glenn And The Flying Dutchman
10.00 Cheryl Miles
PM
4.00 Weekdays With ONE FM

MONEY FM 89.3

AM
6.00 The Breakfast Huddle With Elliott Danker, Yasmin Jonkers & Ryan Huang
10.00 Midday With Howie Lim
PM
2.00 Prime Time With Claressa Monteiro
4.00 The Curve With Michelle Martin & Bernard Lim

UFM100.3

AM
6.00 UFM100.3 Mornings With Wenhong, Limei & Xiaozhu
10.00 Lively Life With Kernin
PM
1.00 Tea With Yuling
4.00 Sing-a-long With Xinying & Weillong
8.00 Feel The Night With Chengyao

96.3 HAO FM

AM
6.00 Morning Drive Time With Jing Yun, De Ming And Jie Qi
10.00 Lunch Break With Anna
PM
1.00 Automation
4.00 Evening Drive Time With Li Yi And Guo Xian
8.00 Night Time With Wei Wen

Tides

SUN RISE/SET TIME: 7:13am/7:16pm
MOON RISE/SET TIME: 1:49pm/1:27am

TIDES TODAY: Singapore: 5.11am (2.6m), 11.26am (1.4m), 5.22pm (2.3m), 11.16pm (1.4m). Desaru: 4.39am (2.5m), 11.03am (1.5m), 5.15pm (2.3m), 10.54pm (1.7m). Port Dickson: 12.11am (2.1m), 7.02am (1m), 12.38pm (1.7m), 6.41pm (0.8m). Mersing: 3.49am (2.7m), 10.48am (1.6m), 5.08pm (2.4m), 10.25pm (2m).

TIDES TOMORROW: Singapore: 6.05am (2.6m), 12.48pm (1.3m), 7.05pm (2.2m). Desaru: 5.20am (2.4m), 12.07pm (1.4m), 6.48pm (2.3m). Port Dickson: 1.40am (2.1m), 8.29am (1m), 1.55pm (1.7m), 8.08pm (0.8m). Mersing: 4.17am (2.6m), 11.33am (1.4m), 6.44pm (2.5m).

For updates and more details, call Meteorological Service Singapore, NEA, on 6542-7788 or go to www.nea.gov.sg

Critics' Choice Awards

Best Comedy for Crazy Rich Asians

SANTA MONICA • Crazy Rich Asians was crowned Best Comedy after it dethroned frontrunner The Favourite at the 24th annual Critics' Choice Awards on Sunday.

It was an uplifting turnaround for the cast after the movie had come up empty-handed a week ago at the Golden Globes – where it was vying for two prizes, including Best Actress for Constance Wu.

The victory marked another major breakthrough for Crazy Rich Asians, which made news last year as the first blockbuster in 25 years to feature an all-Asian cast.

On Sunday, it was up for four prizes, beating also Deadpool 2, The Death Of Stalin, Game Night and Sorry To Bother You for the only statuette it won.

Korean-Canadian actress Sandra Oh – who bagged Best Actress in a Drama Series for Killing Eve – shared in the joy. She ran up to the Crazy Rich Asians cast, hugged them and posed happily for photographs, reported the Entertainment Tonight portal.

The Critics' Choice Awards, considered a bellwether of who will triumph at the Oscars on Feb 24, handed out Best Movie and Best Director prizes to Alfonso Cuaron for Roma, his love letter to Mexico.

Glenn Close proved her Best Actress win at the Golden Globes was no fluke when she once again picked up the same honour – but had to share it with Lady Gaga (A Star Is Born) in a tied result.

Lady Gaga, who broke down in tears when the result was announced, tripped on her way to the stage. But she regained her composure and sense of humour.

Referring to the piano music that plays when a winner drones on too long in an acceptance speech, she said: "It's okay, I can still do this with a piano background."

The spoils were also shared by Amy Adams (Sharp Objects) and Patricia Arquette (Escape At Danemora) in the Best Actress in a Limited Series/TV movie category.

Claire Foy took home the #See-HER award, presented to "a woman who pushes boundaries to help change stereotypes and recognise the importance of authentic portrayals of women across the entertainment landscape".



Attending the Critics' Choice Awards in California are stars including (left, from top) Sandra Oh, Charlize Theron and Rami Malek. PHOTOS: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE, EPA-EFE



Key winners

Best Film: Roma
Best Actor: Christian Bale (Vice)
Best Actress: Glenn Close (The Wife), Lady Gaga (A Star Is Born)
Best Supporting Actor: Mahershala Ali (Green Book)
Best Supporting Actress: Regina King (If Beale Street Could Talk)
Best Director: Alfonso Cuaron (Roma)
Best Song: Shallow (A Star Is Born)



Above from left: Awkwafina, Michelle Yeoh, Constance Wu and Gemma Chan of Crazy Rich Asians, which clinched the Best Comedy Movie award at the 24th annual Critics' Choice Awards on Sunday.

Left: Glenn Close (far left) and Lady Gaga (left) share the Best Actress honour.

West quits Coachella, Grande takes his place

NEW YORK • Kanye West staged a walkout from the Coachella music festival when organisers refused to play along with his request for a custom-built, giant dome for him to perform in.

The rapper had said that the main stage was just too small for him to express his creativity.

But the organisers pointed out that previous headliners Lady Gaga and Beyonce had not had any problems, despite their huge and elaborate sets.

According to Billboard magazine, West made the demand on Jan 1, just two days before Coachella was set to announce him as one of the headliners.

The event is set to be held over two weekends in April in the California desert.

Rebuffing West, the organisers instead reached out to Ariana Grande, who joins Australian rock band Tame Impala and rapper Childish Gambino as the three main acts in the money-making festival.

Indeed, the organisers have not suffered any backlash from West's exclusion, with the initial release of tickets all snapped up in just six hours.

Artists afraid to sing at NFL

NEW YORK • Many artists reportedly turned down the chance to perform at the upcoming Super Bowl half-time show for fear of alienating their fans.

The National Football League behind the Super Bowl has been slammed for taking action against players who knelt during the national anthem to protest against racial injustice.

On Sunday, the NFL ended months of uncertainty by naming three-time Grammy Award winner Maroon 5 as the headliner for the half-time event in Atlanta on Feb 3.

Rapper Travis Scott will perform with the band while Atlanta native Big Boi will be the host.

Maroon 5, whose participation had been speculated for months, had been lobbied to pull out.

An online petition, at change.org, had nearly 85,000 signatures as of Sunday night. The petition reads in part: "Until the league changes its policy and supports players' constitutional right to protest, no artists should agree to work with the NFL."

Scott also announced that he and the NFL are making a joint US\$500,000 (S\$677,000) donation to social justice group Dream Corps.

According to multiple reports, Scott told the NFL he would not perform without it first agreeing to the donation. REUTERS

Wang Baoqiang stars in Stephen Chow's festive film



BEIJING • When Chinese actor Wang Baoqiang started out with bit parts, he found solace in Stephen Chow's King Of Comedy (1999), about the rocky path to fame.

Wang, who has since made good in the industry, is now the star in director Chow's (left) upcoming Chinese New Year release, The New King Of Comedy.

Speaking to the media in Beijing over the weekend, Chow said: "Our story is about extras, so we had to find a man who is a big star now, but had early experience as an extra. Wang fits the job description perfectly."

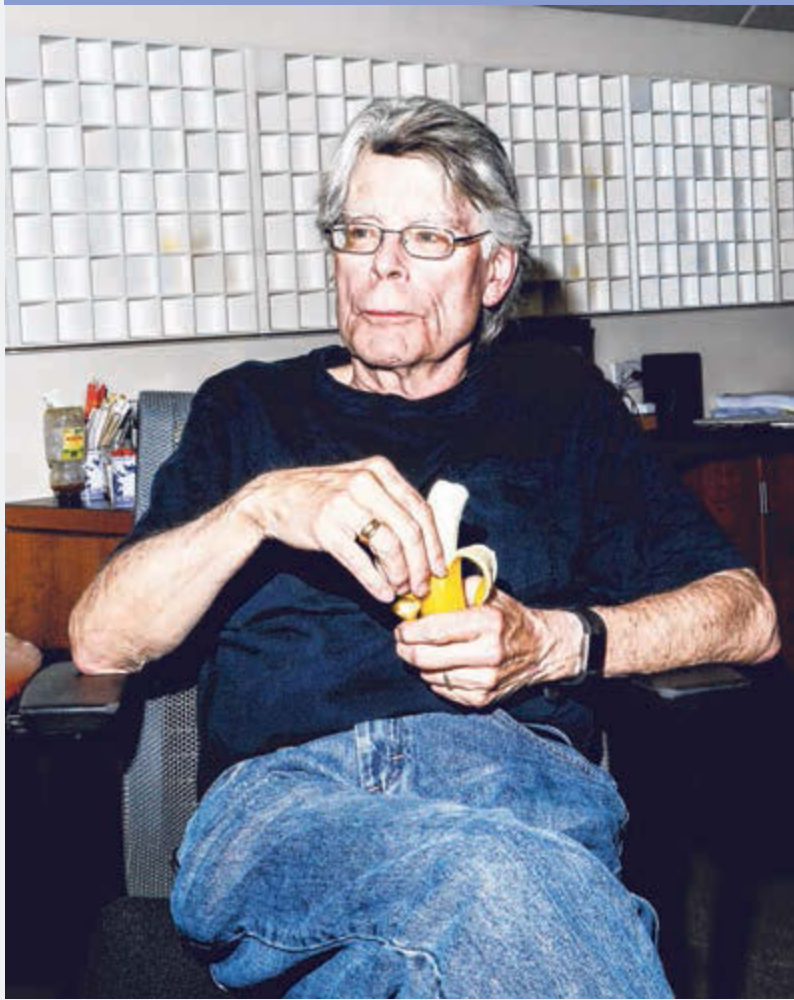
According to china.org.cn, Chow's message in the movie is that there are no short cuts to success, with Wang revealing that, for one scene, he had to do 50 takes.

Chow also walked the talk that support must be given to those willing to work hard to pursue their dreams. He recruited girl group Flurry Girls, who did not triumph in 2018 reality show Produce 101 China on Tencent Video, to record the movie's theme song.

"I heard that they had failed, but that doesn't matter, for who hasn't failed?" he noted.

Chow himself has a stellar record at the Chinese New Year box office, with Journey To The West: Conquering The Demons (2013) netting US\$205 million and The Mermaid making US\$525 million in 2016.

On social media



HAPPY ENDING TO TWEET APPEAL: Horror author Stephen King (left) reacted with horror when the largest daily newspaper in his home state decided it was going to stop publishing regional book reviews.

The best-selling author from Bangor, Maine, tweeted that it was taking away the publicity that writers needed "to buy bread and milk".

He called on his more than five million followers to take action. "Retweet this if you're from Maine (or even if you're not)," he urged. "Tell the paper, don't do this."

The Portland Press Herald responded with a challenge. If King could get his followers to buy 100 digital subscriptions, it would bring back the reviews. "Sales pitch? Blackmail?" King wrote back. "Either way, 71 people have subscribed so far. Are there 29 more Twitterheads out there who want to ante up? Just asking."

By Sunday, The Press Herald had doubled its goal, with about 200 new subscriptions in less than 48 hours. It pledged to continue the reviews of books about Maine or by Maine authors.

"It's a Stephen King story with a happy ending," Ms Lisa DeSisto, chief executive of MaineToday Media, which publishes The Press Herald, said.

PHOTO: NYTIMES

B| HOME

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NUMBER OF POP-UP POSB ATMS DISPENSING NEW NOTES FOR CHINESE NEW YEAR B6

32 O-level Additional Maths scripts lost in Britain

Train passenger took them by mistake; they have not been found despite major probe

Amelia Teng
Education Correspondent

SHOCKED BY LATEST INCIDENT

We were very upset, disappointed and also shocked that it happened so soon after the first incident... We want to give them a grade that is fair and valid.



MSTAN LAY CHOO, chief executive of the Singapore Examinations and Assessment Board. In November 2017, a parcel containing A-level Chemistry answer scripts from 238 Singapore students was stolen from a courier van transporting it to an examiner in Britain.

An examiner's bag containing 32 O-level Additional Mathematics Paper 2 scripts from Singapore was taken by mistake by a train passenger in Britain in November last year. The scripts, which make up 56 per cent of the subject grade, have not been found despite a major investigation by Cambridge Assessment – which administers the examination and marks the scripts. The bag was lost in transit from London to Sheffield in England on Nov 21.

This comes about a year after a parcel containing A-level Chemistry answer scripts from 238 Singapore students was stolen from a courier van transporting it to an examiner in Britain in November 2017.

The Singapore Examinations and Assessment Board (SEAB), which

briefed the media yesterday, said the scripts in the latest case were from two schools – 20 from Nan Hua High School and 12 from Hong Kah Secondary School, which is now known as Jurongville Secondary.

The students, who received their O-level scores yesterday with the rest of their cohort, have been awarded final grades for Additional Mathematics based on their perfor-

mance in Paper 1 and their cohort's performance in both papers.

Their marks in Paper 1 were used to work out their position in terms of percentile ranking within the cohort. The ranking was then used to derive the missing Paper 2 marks. To ensure consistency, their school preliminary exam results were also

[ENSURING FAIRNESS continued on B2](#)

Norman Adli Ramli, 16, hugging his mother, Madam Norlizah Abdul Kahar, 40, a bank officer, after he received his O-level results at Serangoon Garden Secondary School yesterday. He did well enough to qualify for junior college. Students who sat last year's O-level examinations set a new record, with 84.8 per cent of the cohort attaining five or more passes. This is up from 83.4 per cent in 2017 and 84.3 in 2016, which was Singapore's best showing at the national exam in at least three decades. ST PHOTO: LIM YAOHUI

[SEE HOME B2](#)



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Ryan Lu was diagnosed with profound hearing loss in both ears at birth and had surgery at age two to insert an implant. He failed his exams as a Primary 1 pupil at St Stephen's School when he did not know how to read. He has come a long way since, receiving his O-level results yesterday. The former Hai Sing Catholic School student should be able to get into Anglo-Chinese Junior College, says his teacher. ST PHOTO: KEVIN LIM

Doing well in O levels despite hearing loss, speech issues

Ryan Lu taught himself to read lips; teacher says he should be able to enter dream school

Jolene Ang

At the age of four, when most of his peers were learning to read and write, Ryan Lu was learning to read lips.

He was diagnosed with profound hearing loss in both ears at birth and had to undergo surgery at age two to insert a cochlear implant to help him hear.

But even then, his hearing was impaired – so he taught himself to read lips so he could make sense of

the world around him. Besides hearing loss, he also has low muscle tone around his jaw, which affects his speech articulation.

Yesterday, Ryan was one of 26,750 students across Singapore who received their O-level results.

The former Hai Sing Catholic School student did well enough that this year, he should be able to get into his dream school, Anglo-Chinese Junior College, according to his teacher, Mrs Wong Shu Xian.

Now 16, Ryan has come a long way since failing his exams as a Pri-

mary 1 pupil at St Stephen's School, when he did not know how to read.

He said: "My mother sent me for a lot of phonetics lessons so I could learn to read and speak better. It was a few times a week."

His mother works as a financial consultant while his father, who works in real estate, is based in China.

As he grew older, Ryan studied on his own at home. When he was preparing for the O levels, he attended tuition classes for physics and mathematics.

He is able to learn in a regular environment, though Hai Sing Catholic arranged for him to have fewer changes in teachers so he could get used to how they speak.

POSITIVE ATTITUDE

He is a confident boy who doesn't let his condition affect anything. He doesn't give up and he's always positive, despite the difficult time he's had.



MRS WONG SHU XIAN, Ryan Lu's teacher

He also used a frequency modulation wireless listening device that consists of a transmitter, worn by the teacher, and a receiver that he wore.

Ryan sat near the front of his classroom so he could read his teachers' lips. He was exempted from Chinese due to his articulation problems, as well as English oral and listening comprehension.

Ryan has an interest in history and wants to be either a historian or a naval architect.

"When I was in Primary 3, my dad told me stories of World War II that made me want to study history," he said. "He also told me about Chinese history because of his work in China."

Ryan has represented his school twice in the International History Bee and Bowl regional division championships, and was a senior school councillor in Secondary 3 and 4.

Mrs Wong said: "He is a confident boy who doesn't let his condition affect anything. He doesn't give up and he's always positive, despite the difficult time he's had."

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Class of 2018 sets new pass record

Students who sat last year's O-level examinations set a new record, with 84.8 per cent of the cohort attaining five or more passes.

This is up from 83.4 per cent in 2017 and 84.3 in 2016, which was Singapore's best showing at the national exam in at least three decades.

However, there was a dip in the total number of school candidates.

Some 26,750 students who took the O-level exam last year received their results yesterday, compared with 29,112 in 2017.

According to the Ministry of Education and Singapore Examinations and Assessment Board (SEAB), 96.4 per cent of students scored three or more passes last year, keeping pace with their seniors in the year before.

And 99.9 per cent of candidates passed their O levels, meaning they passed at least one subject – a performance that was also comparable to that of 2017.

An SEAB spokesman told The Straits Times that another 1,389 private candidates sat the O-level exams last year, of which 89.6 per cent passed and were awarded certificates.

Students who wish to apply for admission to junior colleges, Millennia Institute, polytechnics and the Institute of Technical Education can apply via the Joint Admissions Exercise.

Registration is open from now to 4pm on Friday.

Students seeking guidance on their education options can approach their teachers or the Education and Career Guidance counsellors supporting their schools.

The Web-based MySkillsFuture portal can also point students to a range of suitable education and career possibilities.

Students may also use the portal to match their interests and aptitudes to specific courses and careers.

Jolene Ang



Benecia Tang with her dad Vincent, an engineer, and mum Emily, a teacher. The Crescent Girls' School girl has dyslexia and hopes to set up a social enterprise for children with learning difficulties one day. ST PHOTO: KUA CHEE SIONG

A dream to help others with learning difficulties

She collected her O-level results only yesterday, but 16-year-old Benecia Tang already has the years ahead all planned out.

Prior to receiving her results, the Crescent Girls' School student had secured a place in Singapore Polytechnic's (SP) School of Business through the Early Admissions Exercise (EAE).

The EAE is an aptitude-based admissions exercise that allows students to apply for and receive conditional offers for admission to polytechnics before receiving their final grades.

When she was in Secondary 3, Benecia started a project on community marketplace app Carousell selling customisable keychains and badges, using skills she learnt in her

co-curricular activity, the Innovation and Enterprise Club.

"I had trouble reaching out to my target audience, so during the break before I start school again (in April), I will try to look for a job or internship in the field of marketing," she said.

She added that her aim is to start a business before she graduates from SP.

But all of that is merely in preparation for a bigger goal – she wants to eventually set up a social enterprise for children with learning difficulties.

Benecia has dyslexia. She was in Henry Park Primary School when she first found out that she had trouble with reading as well as spelling.

In Primary 4, she was officially diagnosed with the disorder.

Her two younger sisters, who are now 12 and 10, were also diagnosed with the same condition at around the same period.

Through her planned social enterprise, she wants to teach children how to live and learn with dyslexia. She also wants to try and help children identify their condition earlier.

"(My learning challenges) were prevalent even before P4," said Benecia, whose mother is a teacher.

"My mum said I started learning to read later than others my age. She had asked my pre-school teacher about it, but the teacher said she was being 'kiasu'."

She knew that she was not on the same level as everyone else, and felt somewhat held back by her dyslexia.

She had issues with reading long passages, as she would skip lines subconsciously. But her therapist taught her how to overcome this by using a reading template that forced her to go line by line.

Currently, at the Dyslexia Association of Singapore, students with the condition can take classes on similar strategies to help them learn better.

"When I'm able to, I would like to level the playing field for people like me and my sisters," Benecia said.

Jolene Ang

Almost all affected students got at least a pass grade

FROM B1

taken into account.

About 91 per cent of the affected candidates, or 29 of them, obtained at least a pass grade, with about 20 getting distinctions – A1 or A2. SEAB said almost all affected candidates had better or the same grades for the subject, compared with their school preliminary exams.

Its chief executive Tan Lay Choo said: "We were very upset, disappointed and also shocked that it happened so soon after the first incident... We want to give them a grade that is fair and valid."

SEAB will be meeting Cambridge Assessment in about two weeks in Britain to discuss how to improve

processes. "We'll also be looking into whether there is cause for us to seek penalty," Ms Tan said.

As in the first case, the students can opt to retake the paper on Feb 15. The better of their two grades – the awarded grade or the one from the second exam – will be counted. They have until Friday to make their decision.

Nan Hua High School principal Tan Jong Lek said the school is confident the students have received a fair and valid assessment, adding that the students "accepted the news calmly". A very experienced teacher will help those who opt for re-examination.

Jurongville Secondary School principal Chan Yew Wooi said the af-

affected students' teacher will set aside every Friday afternoon to meet those who need assistance in their preparations for the re-examination.

Cambridge Assessment's director of assessment Juliet Wilson, who was at the briefing, said Cambridge Assessment started an extensive search through rail companies and the police. It notified SEAB on Dec 14 after it became certain that the scripts were unlikely to be found.

The bag was in a luggage rack near the door of a train carriage and was mistakenly taken by another passenger as it looked like his. The examiner will not be engaged in future as he has breached the security policy by leaving the scripts unattended.

Mrs Wilson said scripts are sent to examiners who are from across the country. "This is a really unfortunate incident, and I have come (here) to show you... how sorry Cambridge Assessment is."

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Cambridge Assessment moves to tighten delivery, transport of exam scripts

Cambridge Assessment is taking steps to tighten its processes in the delivery and transportation of examination scripts, following the two cases of papers getting lost in Britain.

Its director of assessment Juliet Wilson said yesterday: "We have sent a reminder to all examiners to reiterate to them the importance of keeping scripts secure when they are in their possession."

"We are also reviewing our procedures for examiners and looking at the guidelines and instructions we give them."

This could include reviewing where examiners are allowed to

mark scripts. Most scripts are marked at home by examiners, who are not employees of Cambridge Assessment.

The exams board is also moving towards more on-screen or electronic marking, which would reduce the risk of scripts being lost or stolen.

Since 2015, it has been working with the Singapore Examinations and Assessment Board (SEAB) to implement electronic marking, which involves scanning and marking papers using software that examiners have been trained to use.

The roll-out started with the N



Director of assessment Juliet Wilson says Cambridge Assessment is reviewing its procedures for examiners.

levels in 2017. Nearly 65 per cent of scripts across the N, O and A levels were marked on-screen last year.

This year, almost all papers will be marked online.

SEAB chief executive Tan Lay Choo said it has been exploring options such as scanning scripts here before sending them to Britain, or rethinking if there is a need to send the scripts if they can be digitised.

"The incidents may make us speed up some of the plans we have," she said.

Amelia Teng

Freight forwarder cleared of shipping fakes

Apex court rules it was merely providing a service and unaware the goods were fakes

K.C. Vijayan
Senior Law Correspondent

Luxury brands Burberry and Louis Vuitton have failed in their attempt to hold a freight forwarder liable for trans-shipping fakes in two 40-foot containers from China to Batam through Singapore.

In a ruling of industry-wide import, the Court of Appeal drew a line between effective enforcement against fake goods and holding “honest commercial persons” liable who were unaware the goods were fakes. It held, in judgment grounds last week, that “there ought to be some limiting principle that distinguishes those who were truly using the sign for their economic benefit and those who were unknowingly facilitating these acts by merely being the conduit in the movement of the goods in question, for instance cross-border services”.

Judge of Appeal Tay Yong Kwang, writing for the court, which included Judges of Appeal Andrew Phang and Judith Prakash, said enforcing intellectual property rights had to be balanced against over-extending liability to those who were “wholly unaware” of the infringing sign.

The trademark proprietors of Burberry and Louis Vuitton had sued Singapore-based Megastar Shipping for trademark infringement in importing the counterfeit goods by sea.

The case goes back to April 2013, when Singapore Customs, inspecting two 40-foot containers, seized nearly 31,000 items, including China-made bags, shoes, belts and other fashion accessories – all fakes that could potentially have sold for over \$1 million.

They had been shipped from China to Singapore for onward passage to Batam in smaller vessels as the Batam port was too shallow for large container vessels. In Singapore, the containers had to be unloaded and reloaded onto smaller “feeder” vessels.

The trademark owners failed in their suit against Megastar in the High Court in December 2017 and appealed to the apex court.

Their lawyers, led by Mr M. Ravindran, argued that Megastar should be considered the importer as well as the exporter or would-be exporter of the fakes, and was liable under the Trade Marks Act.

Megastar’s lawyers, Mr Leonard Chia and Ms Jasmine Dhanaraj, contested the claims, countering it did not use the signs in the trademark sense and was only providing a freight-forwarding service.

Given the novelty of the legal issue, the court appointed Singapore Management University law professor David Llewelyn as amicus curiae – friend of the court – to address relevant questions.

The court found there was no evidence that Megastar knew or had reason to believe those trademark signs were on the sealed goods as the documents given to it indicated only household goods and other seemingly innocuous generic merchandise.

There was no evidence that luxury products were included in the cargoes.

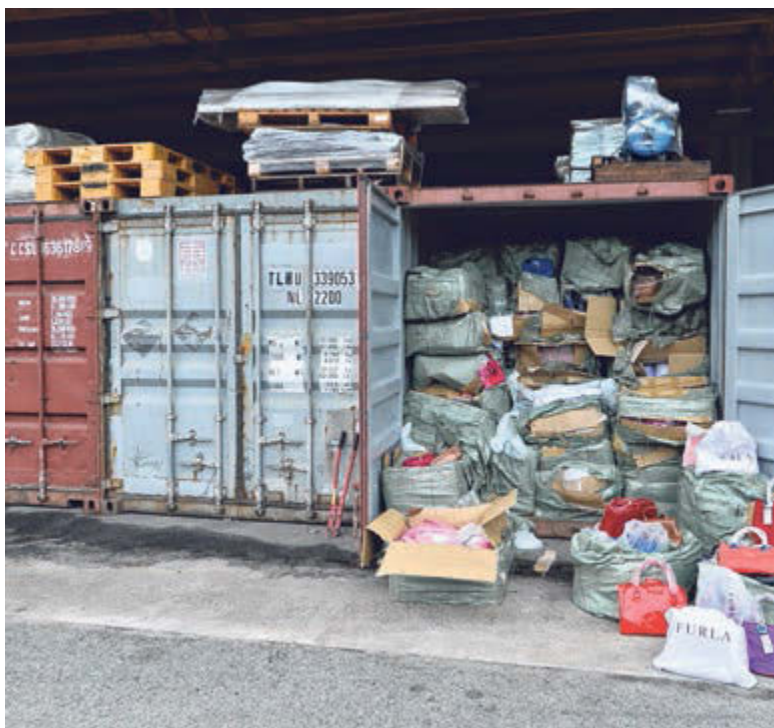
The court found that Megastar was merely providing a commercial service as freight forwarders in its ordinary course of business and nothing more.

To impose liability for trademark breaches on Megastar based on the facts would be against the letter and the spirit of the Act, said the court in dismissing the appeal with costs. “It would seem like a case of needing to make someone liable because the real culprits are not identifiable or reachable,” said the court.

Intellectual property law expert Martin Schweiger, who operates here and in Munich, said the decision has major industry impact as it “sets a reasonable bottom line for the liability of freight forwarders and other service providers in the logistic-handling chain”. “This is a relief for freight forwarders that handle shipping containers in transit, without opening them,” he added.

“Singapore is now very similar to the standards in the US, Europe and many other countries.”

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The case goes back to April 2013, when Singapore Customs seized nearly 31,000 fake items, including China-made fashion accessories, that could potentially have sold for over \$1 million. ST FILE PHOTO



Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong meeting Czech Republic Prime Minister Andrej Babis at the Istana yesterday. They discussed growing collaborations between the two countries, and areas to enhance the relationship, including trade, technology and research. ST PHOTO: ALPHONSUS CHERN

S’pore, Czech Republic have much in common, beyond Bata

Rebecca Lynne Tan

Bata shoes and beer. These are two strong associations that Singaporeans have with the Czech Republic.

Even Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong, like the “many generations of school children in Singapore”, can attest to having worn a pair of white canvas Bata shoes to school.

“I wore them too,” he said in his speech at the Istana, where he hosted Czech Republic Prime Minister Andrej Babis to an official dinner last night.

Singapore and the Czech Republic also share similar outlooks: Both are small and export-oriented trading economies, PM Lee said.

“Because both our countries are dependent on trade, we share an interest in an open and rules-based

multilateral trading system,” he said, adding that he was grateful for the Czech Republic’s “strong and consistent support” for the European Union-Singapore Free Trade Agreement, which was signed last October. He hoped the agreement would be ratified early so that both sides can benefit.

The two countries celebrated 25 years of diplomatic relations last year.

Mr Babis, who is accompanied by Minister of Industry and Trade Marta Novakova, senior government officials and a business delegation, is in town for a two-day official visit, which started with an official welcome ceremony at the Istana yesterday. It is his first trip to Singapore, and to Asia, since taking office in December 2017.

Speaking at the dinner, Mr Babis

also highlighted other similarities between the two countries.

“The stance of our governments on various issues is close enough – not only because we are affected by global problems, but also because our countries form a part of (the) international democratic community and have the privilege to enjoy peace, prosperity and security,” he said.

Both countries should start building new chapters of their bilateral ties in areas from education to science and research, he added.

He also said his country could be viewed as “a gateway to the EU” and that Singapore could similarly help “open doors” for Czech entrepreneurs in South-east Asia.

Earlier, Mr Babis called on President Halimah Yacob and PM Lee.

He and President Halimah reaffirmed warm and friendly relations

and also welcomed the increasing bilateral exchanges at all levels in recent years, particularly the growing economic exchanges and ties between both countries’ institutes of higher learning.

He and PM Lee discussed growing collaborations between the two countries, and areas to enhance the relationship, including trade, technology and research. They also exchanged views on domestic and regional developments.

In 2017, then President Tony Tan Keng Yam made a four-day state visit to the Czech Republic.

Mr Babis has invited PM Lee, who has not been to the Czech Republic, for an official visit soon.

Today, Mr Babis will visit the Botanic Gardens and attend the Singapore-Czech Republic Business Forum 2019 at The Ritz-Carlton, Millenia Singapore.

He will also meet Finance Minister Heng Swee Keat, and visit, in the afternoon, Nanyang Technological University’s Centre of Excellence for Testing & Research of Autonomous Vehicles.

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FAS employee sacked over breach of financial protocols

Shamir Osman

The Football Association of Singapore (FAS) has terminated the contract of one of its employees over the violation of its financial governance protocols.

The Straits Times understands that the FAS procured products and services from a vendor that was connected to the employee.

While there was no material loss suffered by the FAS – it did not pay above market rate for any services rendered by the company – it terminated his contract after receiving a statement of admission from him.

The FAS is a registered charity and an Institution of a Public Character.

FAS general secretary Yazeen Buhari told The Straits Times last night that “a senior staff member of the FAS marketing department was dismissed... on Jan 7, 2019”.

“The FAS has looked into and ascertained that the staff (member) had conducted himself in breach of the FAS financial governance pertaining to conflict of interest, while employed at the FAS,” he added. “This is something that the FAS takes very seriously.”

He said the FAS consulted the Corrupt Practices Investigation Bureau on Jan 9 over the matter, and kept Sport Singapore (SportSG), the national sports agency, abreast of the situation.

Sources revealed to ST that after the FAS learnt of the situation on Jan 4, it conducted its own investigations, and then suspended the employee the following day, including blocking access to offices at FAS’ Jalan Besar headquarters and internal networks.

This is the second time in two years that the spotlight has fallen on governance issues at the FAS, following the 2017 raid on its headquarters by the Commercial Affairs Department.

The raids were conducted following a SportSG police report that came after local media reported on a \$500,000 donation that was made by Tiong Bahru Football Club (TBFC) to the Asean Football Federation through the FAS.

The SportSG police report came just before the FAS’ election that saw then vice-president Lim Kia Tong’s incumbents of Team LKT defeat a group led by TBFC and Hougang United chairman Bill Ng.

On the top of Team LKT’s manifesto was a promise to look into governance issues and “create a transparent FAS that has a high standard of administration”.

After Mr Lim’s team took office in May 2017, it undertook a governance review that saw the tightening of several processes.

All FAS staff had to sign declaration forms and a code of conduct to reinforce the message of accountability. Their remuneration also had to be declared in the interest of transparency.

An external audit was also undertaken to assess the FAS’ adherence to the April 2017 Revised Code of Governance for Charities.

Mr Yazeen said the FAS will further investigate the current situation. He added: “The FAS audit & compliance committee, an independent judicial body of the FAS, is conducting further investigations into the matter, and will take such other steps as may be appropriate.”

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Singapore International Auction Pte.Ltd
新加坡国际拍卖有限公司

Singapore International Fine Art Auction Jan 2019

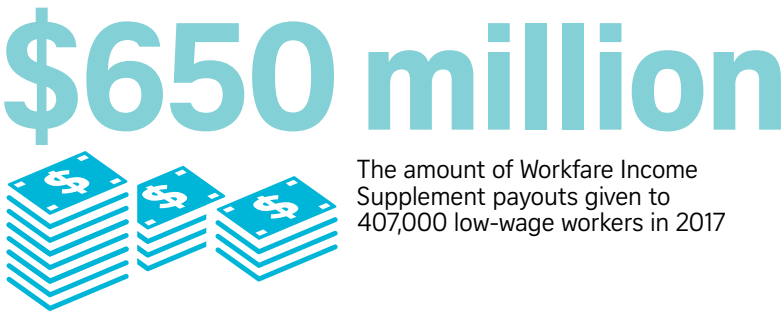
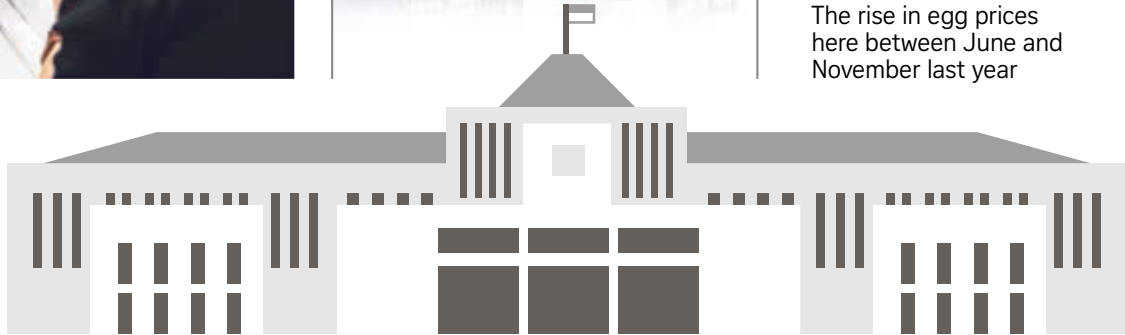
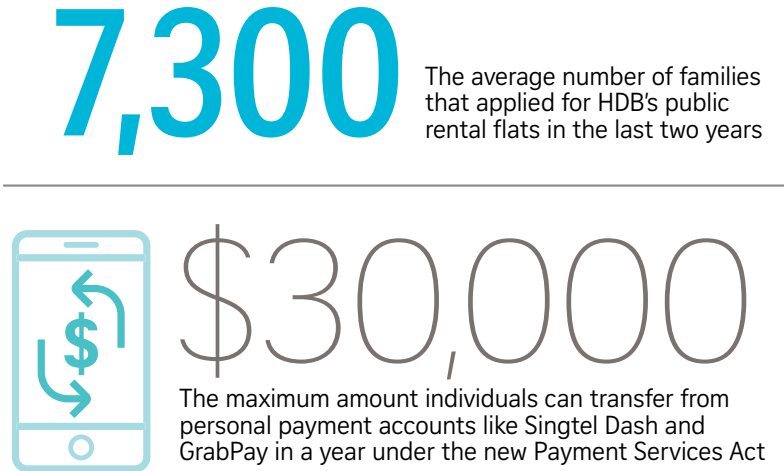
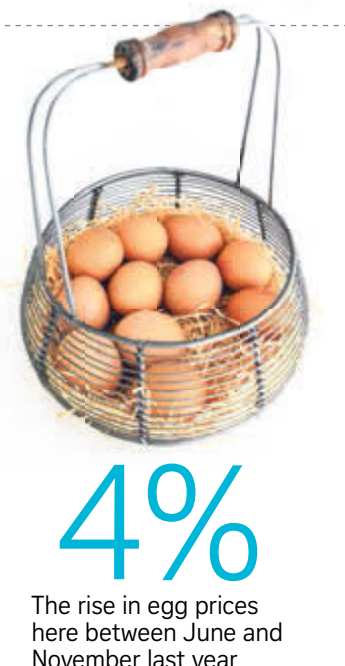
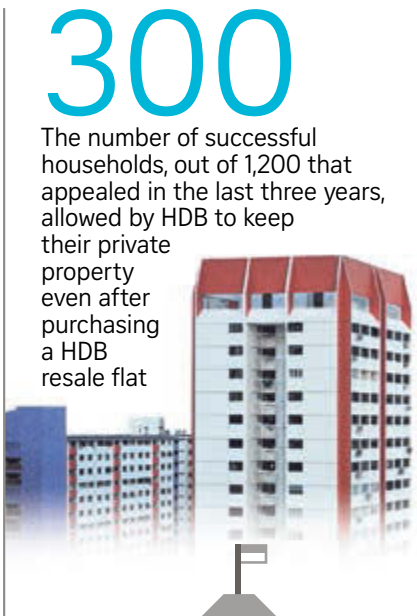
Exhibition/Auction Date
17th — 18th JAN 2019 10:00 am to 19:00 pm

Important Auction of Chinese painting & Calligraphy
10:00am to 12:30pm 18th JAN

Special Auction of Porcelain & Antique
13:00am to 17:00pm 18th JAN

VENUE ADDRESS:
Suntec Singapore Convention &
Exhibition Centre Summit 2 & Room 335 level 3
1 Raffles Boulevard Suntec City, Singapore 039593
HP: (65)-83289888 TEL: (65)-63367688

Parliament in numbers



PHOTOS: ST & BT FILE STRAITS TIMES GRAPHICS

MOE, unis will continue to build local academic core

S'poreans make up half of faculty at unis here, with many schemes to boost local academics

Sandra Davie
Senior Education
Correspondent

Singaporeans account for half of the faculty at the six local universities, with the number remaining stable over the last 10 years, said Education Minister Ong Ye Kung.

He also pointed to several schemes in place to nurture Singaporean academics and build a local academic core in the universities.

Mr Ong was responding yesterday to Mr Seah Kian Peng (Marine Parade GRC), Nominated MP Walter Theseira and Dr Intan Azura Mokhtar (Ang Mo Kio GRC), who asked about the foreign-local divide in the universities.

In recent months, aggressive recruitment schemes initiated by the National University of Singapore (NUS) and Nanyang Technological University (NTU) have sparked a debate on whether Singapore's two leading universities prefer foreign academics and if they did so to chase rankings.

The schemes offer "internationally competitive" salaries and million-dollar research grants for young global academic stars.

Mr Ong said his ministry started the Singapore Teaching and Academic Research Talent (Start) scheme to develop Singaporean academics and to supplement existing schemes at the various autonomous universities.

Under Start, 91 scholarships have

been awarded over the past four years. As it is relatively new, most of the recipients are still studying.

Of the 16 who have completed their studies, 13 are holding faculty positions at the universities, with the rest slated to return to join these universities later this year.

Mr Ong said the recipients have already demonstrated involvement in impactful, locally relevant projects in areas such as languages and palliative care. He said NUS' Presidential Young Professorship scheme and NTU's Nanyang Assistant Professorship scheme aim to attract top local and foreign academics to the autonomous universities (AUs). Thus far, NUS and NTU have granted a total of 91 awards.

Mr Ong also revealed that on average, MOE and the universities invested around \$11 million per year on these three schemes since 2015.

MOE and the local universities will continue to build a strong Singa-

porean academic core, he said, stressing this is especially important in the arts and social sciences as it is important to understand the regional and local contexts.

When it came to building up the local faculty, there were other "practical steps" that MOE was discussing with the universities, he added.

In response to a question on academics who excel in research being preferred over those who excel in teaching, Mr Ong said: "It is also very important we recognise that the primary mission of our AUs is actually to educate the young and develop them, and teaching professorships (and) practice professorships are in fact very important too."

On another question on chasing rankings, the minister said ranking has its uses and Singaporeans should be proud of the high rankings achieved by NUS and NTU.

High rankings can help attract good talent, good students and "there's a whole vibrancy around the whole campus", he said.

But Mr Ong was quick to add that international rankings fall short because of the rubrics used.

They are too focused on research and not so much on teaching, and even within research, there is too much focus on publications rather than translational research.

He said it was important that the university leaders keep in mind these shortcomings and ensure that the universities fulfil their multifaceted mission and not just blindly chase rankings.

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NEA wants to speed up alerts on food licence suspensions

Cheryl Teh

The National Environment Agency (NEA) is looking at ways to alert people more quickly about food operators who have had their licences suspended.

Meanwhile, it will enhance NEA's website and its myENV app to make it easier for people to check the food hygiene records of the operators.

It is also looking at measures to better notify people about an operator's licence being suspended.

These initiatives were announced in Parliament by Senior Minister of State for the Environment and Water Resources Amy Khor yesterday when replying to four MPs who had asked about the spate of food poisonings late last year that affected more than 500 people.

"We are also looking into measures to better notify the public about a food operator's licence suspension," she added.

NEA officers are now equipped with tablets that allows them to access food operators' information and food safety history on the go.

They can also plan their inspections efficiently and be alerted to food-related incidents for a faster response.

Dr Khor gave an update on the five cases of food poisoning last year, saying tough action had been taken against the "food operators who have violated the law" and are responsible for the incidents.

The NEA will continue to suspend the operating licences of TungLok Catering - where 190 people had gastroenteritis - and the ballroom and affected kitchen at Mandarin Orchard hotel, where 175 people got food poisoning.

Their licences are suspended until they have complied with NEA requirements, including sanitising the affected areas and correcting the lapses.

For the lapses found at FoodTalks, NEA will issue summons to the operator, Minister for the Environment and Water Resources Masagos Zulkifli said in a written reply to Mr Christopher de Souza (Holland-Bukit Timah GRC).

As for Team Catering, there were several hygiene lapses, poor

kitchen habits including improper storage of knives and poor housekeeping, and several possible commonly found pathogens were identified in the human stool samples, Mr Masagos added.

In her speech, Dr Khor told the House the NEA has also stepped up its checks, carrying out 77,000 inspections of all food retail establishments last year.

It will continue to do surprise checks, she told Ms Joan Pereira (Tanjong Pagar GRC).

Part of the inspections included more than 2,400 regular checks on food operators that provide catering services or have substantial catering operations.

Dr Khor also said over 900 extra inspections have been done since last month, bringing the total checks on caterers up to 3,300.

She said penalties for food operators involved in significant food poisoning incidents will be tightened.

The total composition amounts for fines will be raised and those who commit serious hygiene offences will be prosecuted.

The NEA will press for deterrent sentences to be imposed by the courts, she added.

The current penalty for selling food unfit for human consumption includes a maximum fine of \$10,000 for the first offence, and \$20,000 or jail of three months or both for repeat offenders.

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Students at the National University of Singapore. In recent months, aggressive recruitment schemes initiated by NUS and Nanyang Technological University have sparked a debate on whether the two leading local universities prefer foreign academics and if they did so to chase rankings. ST FILE PHOTO

NMP Terence Ho suggests Culture Pass for Singaporeans

Akshita Nanda
Arts Correspondent

A Culture Pass mobile app with sponsored "credits" that allow Singaporeans to buy tickets for arts and cultural events, and more efforts to deepen understanding and appreciation of traditional arts, were called for by Nominated Member of Parliament Terence Ho in his maiden speech yesterday.

Mr Ho is executive director of the Singapore Chinese Orchestra.

He is the first NMP from the arts field who is a formally trained musician and from a traditional arts group.

Speaking in Mandarin, he noted that while the number of arts groups in Singapore had increased from 2,689 in 2013 to 3,162 in 2016, paying audiences had shrunk. Only 1.81 million tickets were sold in 2016, compared with 2.06 million in 2012.

More needs to be done to change the mindset of "pragmatic" Singaporeans to increase their interest in

arts and culture so they make it an integral part of their lives, he said.

He suggested that arts education should be part of National Education for Primary 3 and 4 pupils, who should get the chance to watch at least one arts performance a year.

He also mooted the Culture Pass, with free credits that Singaporeans could use to offset the cost of tickets.

In addition, he said traditional arts have an important part to play in creating shared understanding across different communities in

Singapore, and suggested setting up think-tanks to research the importance of these arts.

In response, Mr Baey Yam Keng, Senior Parliamentary Secretary for the Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth, said the National Arts Council would build capabilities and enhance research on the traditional arts under its five-year blueprint for the arts, Our SG Arts Plan. For example, Stamford Arts Centre, which was revamped and reopened last year, will house a mix of traditional arts groups from differ-

ent ethnic communities that would be able to bring these arts to the community.

He added that the ministry and the arts council would consider the Culture Pass "as part of ongoing efforts to grow audiences, and enhance accessibility of arts and culture by leveraging technology".

He said while ticket-buying fell in 2016, that year had the highest attendance at arts and culture events since 2012, thanks to more non-ticketed performances.

Both ticketed and non-ticketed

attendance, he added, contribute "to the vibrancy and sustainability of our arts and culture landscape".

He said: "We hope that non-ticketed arts activities will create accessible entry points to the arts, while artists and arts groups will build on this increased awareness and create works that could interest and attract more people to become paying audience."

Mr Tan Hong Ging, 31, marketing manager of Chinese chamber music company Ding Yi, said the proposed pass could help bring in new ticket buyers, but ticketing platforms like Sistic and Peatix will have to be brought on board.

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More payment services to be regulated by MAS

New law will also set limits on e-money held in mobile wallets

Aw Cheng Wei

Parliament passed a law yesterday that puts more payment services, such as digital payment tokens and merchant acquisition, under the ambit of the Monetary Authority of Singapore (MAS).

Called the Payment Services Act, it will also impose limits on how much e-money can be held in personal mobile wallets, such as GrabPay and Singtel Dash, and how much can be transferred to accounts other than the user's designated bank accounts in a year, among other things.

The new law aims to right-size "regulations depending on the risks posed by the payment service provider", said Mr Ong Ye Kung, an MAS board member, yesterday.

It tailors Singapore's regulations to the licensees' activities, such as account opening, issuing electric money and transferring money in the Republic and across its borders, added Mr Ong, who is also the Minister for Education.

Risks that the new Act wants to address include terrorism financing, money laundering and cyber risks.

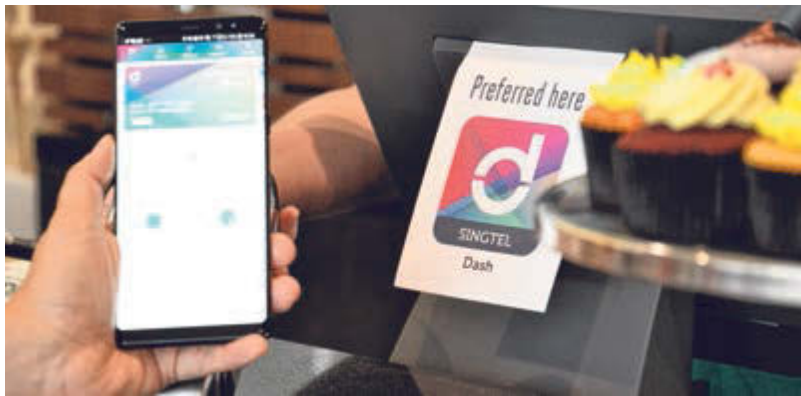
Currently, the MAS regulates payment services under the Payment Systems (Oversight) Act, or PS(O)A, and the Money-changing and Remittance Businesses Act (MCRBA), governing stored value facilities such as ez-link, Nets Cash-Card and remittances.

The new Act streamlines the regulation of payment services in a single activity-based legislation, and both the PS(O)A and MCRBA will be repealed when the legislation takes effect by the end of this year.

Mobile wallets such as GrabPay and Singtel Dash also cannot hold more than \$5,000 at any point in time, and their users cannot transfer more than \$30,000 in a year to accounts other than the user's designated bank accounts.

During the debate, three MPs, one Non-Constituency MP (NCMP) and four Nominated MPs (NMPs) spoke in support of the Bill, while raising questions that ranged from new account limits to the inclusion of migrant workers in digital remittances.

NMP Lim Sun Sun, NCMP Leon Perera and Mr Louis Ng (Nee Soon



Under the Payment Services Act, mobile wallets like Singtel Dash cannot hold more than \$5,000 at any point in time. PHOTO: SINGTEL

GRC) asked whether more could be done to raise financial literacy and consumer protection levels.

Professor Lim proposed that "public education efforts be stepped up to better communicate to consumers the various options, protections and incentives they enjoy with the different emerging e-payment methods".

Replying, Mr Ong said that "the MAS and other agencies have been reaching out to people... through MoneySense, the national financial education programme".

NMP Anthea Ong highlighted the difficulties migrant workers may face in accessing e-payment solutions and bank accounts.

Mr Ong said he expects more mi-

grant workers to use fintech to remit money overseas and the Bill will "strengthen safeguards for these payment services".

NMP Walter Theseira and Mr Saktiandi Supaat (Bishan-Toa Payoh GRC) asked how the Bill compares with other countries' regulations on e-payment services.

Mr Ong said the "MAS has consciously balanced mitigating risks with promoting innovation".

"The best way to do this is to avoid a one-size-fits-all approach and adopt a risk-based approach (so) that the regulatory requirements... are commensurate with the risk of the business activities."

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MOH gets boost in infectious disease surveillance

Rei Kurohi

The Ministry of Health (MOH) will be able to remotely monitor people who may have infectious diseases, with the passing of the Infectious Diseases (Amendment) Bill yesterday.

Senior Minister of State for Health Lam Pin Min said this would be made possible by technological advancements.

Such monitoring will be allowed with a new definition of surveillance given in the Bill.

The new law will also allow MOH to order healthcare facilities and laboratories to submit samples or information for public health surveillance and research for a specified period of time. Currently, the ministry has to issue a new legal order each time it collects a sample.

The MOH can also share data collected, including individually identifiable information and samples, with third-party researchers. Other changes allow Singapore to turn away non-citizen travellers who have not been vaccinated against diseases like yellow fever, and monitor travellers leaving Singapore to prevent exporting diseases in an outbreak here.

Controls on the movements and activities of those at risk of transmitting infectious diseases have also been changed.

Those with a low risk can go to work under specified conditions that reduce their risk of infecting others. For example, a food handler with a food-borne disease may be allowed to do tasks that do not involve contact with food, Dr Lam said.

Those with a high risk can be detained by health officers, have their movements restricted and may not be allowed to leave the country if they do not comply with public health measures.

Eight MPs spoke during the debate, asking about the scope of the enhanced powers and the procedures for exercising them.

Mr Melvin Yong (Tanjong Pagar GRC) said safeguards are needed to ensure the Bill's powers do not go unchecked.

He asked if there would be a maximum number of consecutive days that people could be subjected to medical surveillance or stop-work orders.

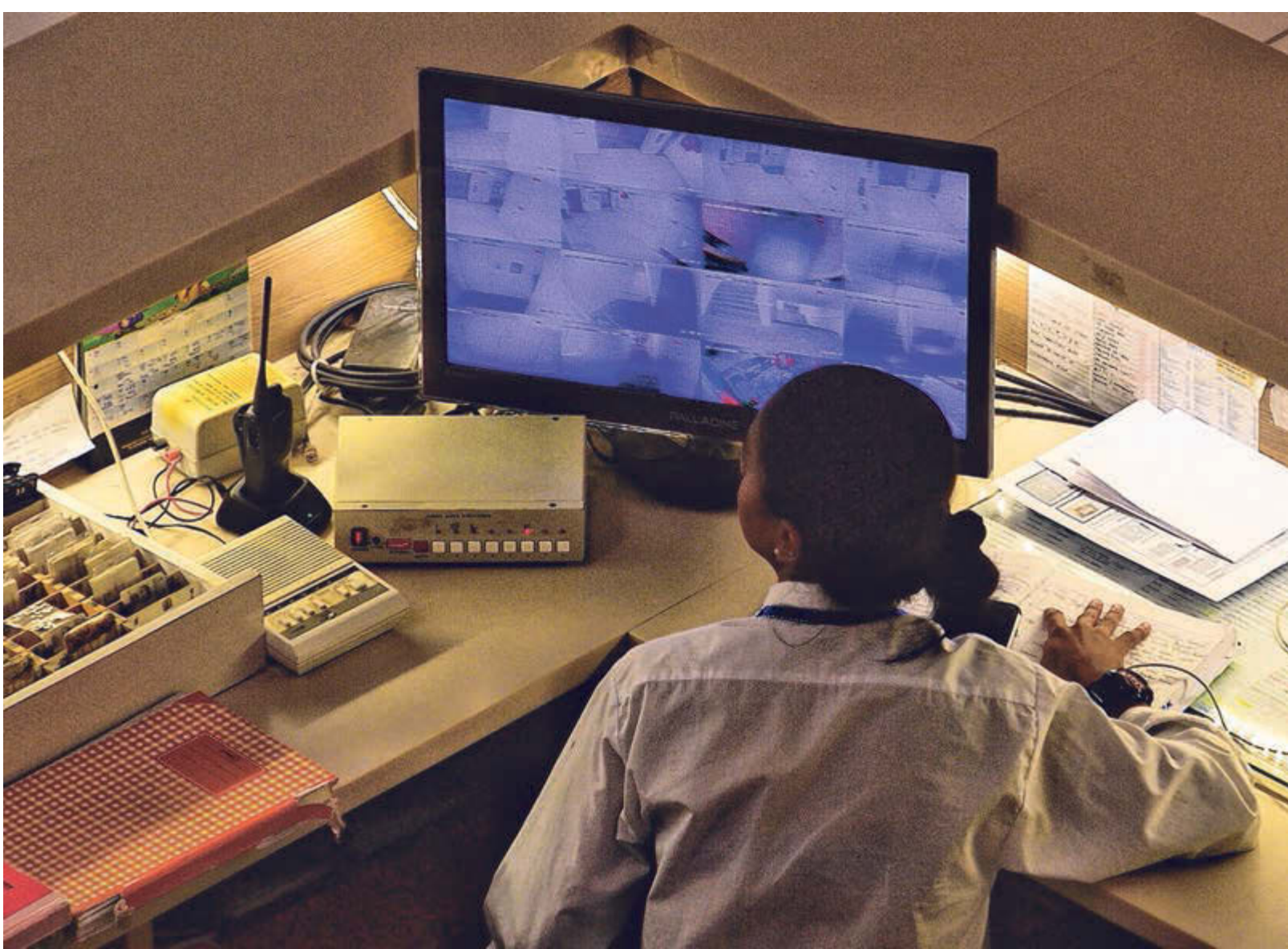
Dr Lam said the MOH would consider various factors when deciding on the extent and duration of public health measures.

"For example, the number of days a person is subjected to surveillance or quarantine is dependent on the disease's incubation period," he added.

Mr Louis Ng (Nee Soon GRC) asked how the need to disclose individually identifiable information would be determined.

Dr Lam said the data "will be used only if the director of medical services is satisfied the research can only be carried out with such identifiable information or samples."

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The punishments for errant security officers are meant to stop undesirable behaviour like sleeping or consuming alcohol on the job. ST PHOTO: DESMOND WEE

Stiffer penalties aim to deter unprofessional conduct

Hariz Baharudin

The harsher punishments imposed on errant security officers this year are to deter unprofessional behaviour such as sleeping or consuming alcohol on the job, said Senior Parliamentary Secretary for Home Affairs Sun Xueling yesterday.

But these punishments are not part of a "punitive regime", added Ms Sun, who is also Senior Parliamentary Secretary for National Development.

Since Jan 1, security officers who sleep on the job, come to work

drunk or display other errant behaviour face a fine of up to \$2,000, a maximum jail term of three months, or both.

The offences may also be compounded by a fine, in lieu of prosecution, said Ms Sun, replying to Workers' Party chairman Sylvia Lim (Aljunied GRC).

She also said first-time offenders will generally get a warning, as has been the practice before.

For repeat offenders, the Police Licensing and Regulatory Department can impose a "composition fine" instead of suspending or revoking the security officer's licence.

"Only in the most severe or recalcitrant cases would penalties such as licence suspension or revocation, and prosecution be considered," she added.

Before this move, those who did not do their job properly faced a

\$2,000

Security officers who sleep on the job, come to work drunk or display other errant behaviour may be fined up to this amount.

range of punishments, including a verbal warning, suspension or the sack.

Ms Lim then asked if shift hours for security officers would be shortened from 12 to eight hours.

Replying, Ms Sun said the committee tasked to transform the security industry encourages security agencies to move towards shorter working hours, where possible.

The committee is co-chaired by the Home Affairs Ministry, Singapore National Employers Federation and the labour movement.

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Bill to bolster checks in gem deals, fight crime and improve security

Tan Tam Mei and Rei Kurohi

Jewellery retailers and dealers of precious metals and stones, including second-hand dealers and auction houses, will have to register with the Law Ministry under a proposed law introduced in Parliament yesterday.

Registration of the dealers of precious stones and metals, like diamonds, jade, silver and gold, is expected to start in the second quarter of this year.

There are about 2,500 of them and after the Precious Stones and Precious Metals (Prevention of Money Laundering and Terrorism Financing) Bill has been passed, they have to register within six months of its enforcement.

The Bill introduced by Senior Minister of State for Law Edwin Tong stipulates that dealers have to carry out stricter due diligence checks on customers when handling transactions, as part of efforts to boost Singapore's standards of anti-money laundering and counter the financing of terrorism.

This includes performing risk assessments of customers and transactions and also having internal procedures to mitigate risks.

This will combat crime and improve security, both at home and across the world, the ministry said in a statement.

The portability of precious stones and metals and ease of converting their high value into cash expose the industry to the risk of money laundering and terrorism financing, it added.

The proposed changes will also cover goods like watches or luxury items in which more than 50 per cent of the finished product's value come from precious stones or metal.

This is the first time specific rules have been proposed to regulate the industry against the threat of money laundering and terrorism financing. However, existing measures under the Corruption, Drug Trafficking and Other Serious Crimes (Confiscation of Benefits) Act require dealers to submit cash transaction reports for deals exceeding \$20,000 and suspicious transaction reports.

There have been more suspicious transaction reports in the last few years, according to figures from the Commercial Affairs Department, from the financial sec-

tor, including banks, money changers and insurance companies.

The white-collar crime unit received 35,471 reports of suspicious transactions in 2017, a 22 per cent rise since 2014.

More cash transaction reports were also made in 2017: 380,553, which is a 3 per cent increase over the previous year.

Two other Bills were introduced yesterday.

An amendment to the Tobacco (Control of Advertisements and Sale) Act requires cigarette packs sold in Singapore to have a standardised drab, dark brown appearance.

They cannot carry logos or promotional information, and images showing the ill-effects of smoking must cover at least three-quarters of the pack, up from half.

Changes in the Traditional Chinese Medicine Practitioners (Amendment) Bill require practitioners to upgrade their knowledge, as with mainstream doctors. The maximum fine for errant practitioners will be raised, from \$10,000 to \$50,000.

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Parliament Briefs

CAAS to develop system to monitor drones

The Civil Aviation Authority of Singapore (CAAS) plans to develop a system to monitor unmanned aircraft systems.

The system will allow it to check if individual drones are operating under a valid permit, and issue alerts to pilots who fall afoul of regulations, Senior Minister of State for Transport Lam Pin Min said yesterday.

He was responding to questions from MPs about anti-drone measures, in the light of drone-induced disruptions that affected two major London airports recently.

Dr Lam said there were eight cases of unauthorised drones flying within 5km of Changi Airport in the past three years, but none involved intrusions into Changi Airport.

New rules for bringing in controlled chemicals

People bringing in controlled chemicals into Singapore in excess of the allowed quantity will have to first get transport approval under changes to the Chemical Weapons (Prohibition) Act.

This is in addition to an existing licence they would need to get, to use these chemicals here. The new rules are part of efforts to tighten national security, and prevent the stockpiling and use of chemical weapons.

The new laws apply to Schedule 2 and 3 chemicals, which are potential chemical warfare agents, or chemicals that have previously been used as warfare agents. Insecticides and toiletries are among the items that could be affected under the new rules.

Among other things, inspectors have also been given greater powers, such as being able to arrest those breaking the new laws, under certain circumstances.

Out of 490k flat owners, 65% took HDB loans

There were 490,440 Housing Board flat owners servicing mortgages as at the end of last year, of which 65 per cent took loans from HDB.

The average monthly instalment for three-room flats or smaller was \$567. For four-room flats, it was \$853, and for five-room flats, it was \$1,058. For executive flats or larger, it was \$1,253. Of these, 70 per cent paid the monthly instalments fully using their CPF funds, 14 per cent paid fully in cash, while 16 per cent used both cash and CPF funds.

In a written reply to Nominated MP Walter Theseira, National Development Minister Lawrence Wong said that as of September last year, less than a third of all outstanding housing loans extended by banks were pegged to floating interest rates. This was down from about 60 per cent in 2016.

Bali police allegedly quiz Indonesian here without permit

Businessman in civil dispute says two officers visited him in hospital and tried to get him to return to Indonesia

Zaihan Mohamed Yusof

An Indonesian businessman with interests in the hotel industry and real estate claimed two police officers from Bali tried to take him back to the island while he was recovering in a Singapore hospital.

In an interview with The Straits Times on Jan 4, Mr Hartono Karjadi, 66, claimed the officers were here over a civil dispute he is having with Mr Tomy Winata, an Indonesian businessman.

The two men had a disagreement regarding the sale of shares in the five-star Kuta Paradiso hotel in Bali, reported Indonesian media.

Mr Hartono said he agreed to have the officers accompany him to his apartment in Orchard Road but refused to travel with them to Bali. He made a police report about the incident in Singapore on Dec 4 last year.

Bali police chief commissioner Hengky Widjaja confirmed two officers were in Singapore on Oct 19 last

year while Mr Hartono was recovering at Mount Elizabeth Hospital in Orchard Road after a colonoscopy.

In a statement to ST, Commissioner Hengky said Mr Hartono's lawyer in Indonesia had informed the police in August that his client would be unable to attend two police interviews as he was scheduled to have treatment in Singapore.

"Bali police investigators went to Singapore from Oct 17 to Oct 20 with orders not to arrest him but only to verify his health condition.

"(During) the visit to see the suspect, coordinated between the Bali investigators and the Indonesian police attache in Singapore, (they were) accompanied by the Singapore police," he added.

But the Singapore Police Force (SPF) said it did not receive nor facilitate any request made by the Indonesian National Police or Bali police in relation to the officers' visit to Singapore.

"The SPF was not informed by the Bali police that their officers would be making a visit to Mr



A screen grab from closed-circuit television footage taken outside Mr Hartono Karjadi's Orchard Road apartment showing (from right) Mr Hartono, his friend and two other men, believed to be police officers from Bali. The two officers visited the businessman at Mount Elizabeth Hospital last October. PHOTO: ST READER

Hartono Karjadi in Singapore.

"SPF officers were not present during any meeting that allegedly took place between the Bali police officers and Mr Hartono Karjadi in Singapore," it said in a statement.

The SPF said a police report has been lodged regarding the incident involving Mr Hartono, and investigations are ongoing.

"The SPF takes a serious view of any foreign law enforcement officers who illegally exercise extra-territorial investigation powers in Singapore without obtaining prior approval from the Singapore authorities," it added.

Singapore and Indonesia signed an Extradition Treaty and Defence

Cooperation Agreement as a package in April 2007 in Bali, but Indonesia has yet to ratify the agreement.

Such agreements respect a nation's sovereignty, said lawyer Sawant Singh. He added: "There will be no misunderstanding between two countries' police forces if you follow agreements and protocols in place."

Lawyers said foreign law enforcement agencies coordinate with the SPF when they want to conduct interviews in Singapore with people of interest who may be linked to a matter in their country.

Mr Hartono has not returned to Indonesia.

Mr Andy Yeo from Eldan Law, who is representing Mr Hartono,

Singapore and Indonesia signed an Extradition Treaty and Defence Cooperation Agreement as a package in April 2007 in Bali, but Indonesia has yet to ratify the agreement.

said a report had been lodged in Indonesia against his client over what was "manifestly a civil insolvency matter". "This was clearly a situation whereby Indonesian policemen from a foreign police (Bali) had been wrongfully exercising their powers in another sovereign country and acting in excess of their jurisdiction," he added.

Brigadier-General Dedi Prasetyo, a spokesman for the Indonesian National Police, said Indonesia respects other countries' sovereignty.

Mr Hartono said the officers visited him while he was resting. "I was still groggy when I was awoken by a nurse, who said I had visitors.

"One of them identified himself as Agung from Bali police headquarters," he said in Bahasa Indonesia.

"Agung" told Mr Hartono to settle his medical bill and follow him. The three men then went to a restaurant at Paragon.

One of Mr Hartono's friends joined them and the four left for his apartment in Orchard Road.

He provided a screen grab of closed-circuit television footage that showed the four men at his apartment corridor.

In the apartment, the Bali police officers took photographs of Mr Hartono and his friend, and a copy of the hospital bill, he added. He claimed they tried to record his statement, but he told them he was not going to sign anything and they left.

Mr Hartono said he was later interviewed by Singapore police officers who showed him several photos, and he identified one of the men as "Agung".

Mount Elizabeth Hospital told ST that it was cooperating with investigations.

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Hoping to strike it rich



More than 200 punters queueing up to buy Toto tickets at Tong Aik Huat, a Singapore Pools authorised retailer, at Block 685, Hougang Street 61, yesterday. Last night, one person won the Group 1 cascade draw prize of \$9,588,137. The winning ticket was sold at Singapore Pools' Empress Road branch at Block 8, Empress Road. ST PHOTO: DESMOND FOO

Man gets 4 months' jail for posting nude photos of maid online

Fabian Koh

A Bangladeshi man, angry with a foreign domestic worker for rejecting his advances, leaked her nude photos online.

For his actions, Islam Rokibul, 32, a marine trades worker, was sentenced to four months' jail yesterday.

He had pleaded guilty to criminal intimidation and transmitting obscene material by electronic means.

Deputy Public Prosecutor Jaime Pang told the court that Islam and his 28-year-old victim first got to know each other on Facebook.

The victim cannot be named to protect her identity.

One day, Islam had a video call with the woman on Facebook Messenger while she was in the shower.

He managed to take multiple screenshots of her face and naked body without her knowledge or permission. He did this in order to force her into a permanent relationship with him.

Some time in September last year, the maid stopped communicating with Islam.

At around 9.30am on Sept 9, he phoned the woman and threatened to post her photos online if she refused to have a permanent relationship with him.

He made multiple calls and also sent her several text messages, repeating the threat.

When his attempts did not work, Islam used his mobile phone to post seven nude photos of the woman on social media platform IMO, knowing that these would be circulated.

Islam did this to shame the victim as he was angry with her, said DPP Pang.

She made a police report at Yishun North Neighbourhood Police Centre on Oct 4.

The DPP told the court that although the images on IMO have since been deleted, the woman still receives them from unknown people, along with requests for sex.

For criminal intimidation to impute that a woman is unchaste, Islam could have been jailed for up to 10 years and fined. For transmitting obscene images electronically, he could have been jailed for up to three months and fined.

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F&B firm fined for making false salary declarations

Ng Huiwen

The food and beverage company behind popular restaurant chain Penang Culture has been fined \$94,500 for making false salary declarations in work pass applications, the Ministry of Manpower (MOM) said yesterday.

GD Group was found guilty last month – on Dec 27 – of seven charges under the Employment of Foreign Manpower Act, with another 13 taken into consideration during sentencing.

The ministry has also barred the company from hiring foreign employees, it said in a statement.

According to its website, GD Group owns Penang Culture, which is touted as the first Penang-themed halal restaurant chain in Singapore. It also has a catering arm that offers live food stations at events.

Investigations found that GD Group had circumvented foreign worker quota rules by hiring foreigners on employment passes, but paying them less than the salaries declared in the work pass applications.

Between February 2013 and July 2015, the company falsely declared salary amounts of between \$4,000 and \$4,800 for 20 foreign employees to meet the salary requirement for employment passes. However, the foreign employees were paid salaries of between \$1,500 and \$2,200.

In the statement, MOM's foreign manpower management division director of employment inspectorate Kandhavel Periyasamy said GD Group had "gained an unfair advantage in hiring foreigners at the expense of other firms".

Under the Employment of Foreign Manpower Act, those convicted of making false declarations may be fined up to \$20,000 per charge and/or jailed for up to two years.

A GD Group spokesman told The Straits Times that it deeply regrets the mistake that was made, and said it will ensure that the incident does not recur.

"There is no excuse for us making false salary declarations and we take full ownership and responsibility for it," the spokesman said.

nghuiwen@sph.com.sg



The 42 temporary ATMs, installed islandwide, will allow customers to obtain new notes with more ease, DBS Group said. PHOTO: DBS/POSB

Get new notes for CNY at 42 pop-up ATMs

DBS/POSB customers keen to get their hands on new and "good-as-new" notes for the upcoming Chinese New Year will be able to do so from today at any of 42 temporary ATMs installed across the island.

The number is six more than that last year and will allow customers to obtain new notes with more ease, DBS Group said in a statement yesterday.

The temporary ATMs, which were introduced in 2015 in partnership with the People's Association, will be available till Feb 4, the eve of Chinese New Year, at 20 community clubs islandwide, the statement said.

These ATMs will be available 24 hours daily, apart from the ones in Chong Pang and Teck Ghee, which will be available only from 9am to

9.30pm daily, it added.

In the statement, Mr Jeremy Soo, DBS' managing director and head of consumer banking group in Singapore, said: "Our aim is to ensure this season is as stress- and hassle-free as possible for our customers."

Besides making use of the pop-up ATMs, customers will also be able to skip the queue by getting their new and "good-as-new" notes through online reservations this year.

Last year, more than 160,000 customers benefited from the pop-up ATMs, with many of them obtaining their notes outside of banking hours or over the weekend, the statement said.

Customers will be able to use their DBS/POSB cards to withdraw new notes in sums of \$100 (\$2 x 50), \$300 (\$10 x 30), \$500 (\$50 x 10) and \$600 (\$10 x 20 and \$50 x 8), forgoing the need for multiple transactions.

Customers who prefer to make an online reservation can choose from denominations of \$2, \$10 and \$50.

They will be able to collect the new notes on their preferred dates and timings at all full-service branches.

Customers can visit go.dbs.com/sg-cnynotes or www.posb.com.sg/cnynotes from today to reserve their new notes.

Ng Huiwen

BEYOND 0 LEVELS

BY MEREDITH WOO

She makes clothes for men.
The Raffles College of Higher Education (Raffles Design) graduate is part of a generational business of tailors where she is learning the art of making bespoke suits. The traditional craft is very technical and hands-on — qualities she appreciates — and she enjoys being involved in the entire production process of a garment.

Ms Annabel Zee, 26, attributes her passion for artistry to her education at Raffles Design.

In 2015, she enrolled in the full-time, two-year Advanced Diploma in Fashion Design, followed by a one-year Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Fashion, awarded by Coventry University in the United Kingdom, and delivered by Raffles Design. She graduated in December 2017 with First Class Honours.

Her creative talent was recognised when she was shortlisted for the Frankfurt Style Awards 2017. Her creative practitioners encouraged her to go for it, and she flew to Germany, gained new perspectives and forged new friendships.

Ms Zee tells us more:

Why did you enrol at Raffles Design?

I chose Raffles Design because of its curriculum structure. The schedules are compact, and the school approaches fashion as a whole. We are trained in all spectrums of the fashion industry, from sourcing to design, to production. When we approach fashion, we do not take it only from the creative aspect, but strike a balance with practicality and functionality.

What were key takeaways from your time at the college?

As Raffles Design takes a holistic approach to fashion, it piqued my curiosity to how fabrics are made in the mills, the endless varieties in the market, and the entire creative process, right to the drafting, cutting and sewing. When I graduated, I knew that I wanted to work in a place where I would be involved in the entire production process of a garment, from start to finish.

I also received a lot of tough love from Raffles



Cut from a different cloth

Raffles College of Higher Education helped to shape Ms Annabel Zee into an unconventional fashion graduate



The Boys are Back: Shortlisted entry for Men's Folio Designer of the Year 2016.

Design's team of creative practitioners, and I deeply value their effort to nurture and care for their students. I graduated not only with a degree, but also with a newfound family.

What sparked your interest in menswear?

My creative practitioner recognised this as my strength. Perhaps it has roots in my childhood, when I saw a lot of men in uniform. There is this masculinity that I embrace, and I have never looked back. Menswear is definitely more challenging, and it also requires an understanding of their behavioural patterns (how they shop, functionality issues, and so on).

Why do you describe yourself as unconventional?

If I compare myself to my peers, they are either pursuing further fashion studies or working as designers or junior designers. I am apprenticing at a local tailor, under a "shifu" (master).

I continue to hone my skills, building from what I acquired at Raffles Design — how a bespoke suit is crafted, and the man-hours required to make a gentleman look and feel good. From the ancient method of constructing handmade floating chest pieces to getting the perfect fit, right to the buttonholes — everything is a craft, and very different from the mass-produced, ready-to-wear garments that are available everywhere.

I had a stint with a luxury label, but it made me long for something more, other than wanting my clients to look and feel good. My previous job on the sales floor also trained me in interpersonal relationships, taught me to be sincere with clients, and how to treat them as individuals.

GET IN TOUCH

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BEYOND 0 LEVELS



Up, up and away

Entrepreneur Vanessa Nee says EASB's lecturers have helped her have a clearer vision for her events business

GET IN TOUCH

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BY NANCY KOH

Put a balloon in Miss Vanessa Nee's hands and she can create magic, turning it into something that brings smiles to people.

The business management student at the East Asia Institute of Management (EASB) is a self-described “accidental entrepreneur”.

Miss Nee, 20, runs Vantastic Event, which supplies balloon sculptures, kacang putih, popcorn and candy floss machines, on top of entertaining magic shows (above). And she has been doing this since she was 14.

Her entrepreneurship journey started when she volunteered to help create a flag made of a record-breaking 19,368 balloons for a community dinner. She then continued making balloon sculptures for community

and charity events, and eventually got commissioned to do this for private events.

After completing her studies at Yusof Ishak Secondary School, she decided to enrol in EASB as it offered a faster route to a degree. She joined the institute in 2016 to study Business Management as it is relevant to her fledgling business.

"At EASB, I learn the proper way to do business and get a better understanding of how to run a company and grow it. The lecturers are very helpful, showing me how to apply marketing strategy to boost traffic for my website, how to maintain a ledger, and how I can invest my earnings," she says.

"The school doesn't pressure us to score good grades. Instead, it encourages students by guiding those who are lagging behind. The environment is conducive in helping us do our best.

"EASB is not a typical private school where you struggle with self-study. The lecturers will go the extra mile to help you."

From quiet to confident

As a child, Miss Nee was an introvert. But when her father died from cardiac arrest at the age of 50, the devastated teenager had to “grow up fast, become independent and earn money so that I would not be a financial burden to my mother”

Having inherited her late father's determination, Miss Nee's willingness to try new things saw her through.

By the age of 16, she had earned enough money to buy a second-hand cotton candy machine for \$300. She also scrimped and saved to buy a popcorn machine to boost her business.

EASB has not only helped to hone Miss Nee's business skills, but has also turned her into a confident, self-assured person who often takes the lead in team projects and is not afraid to showcase her other talents.

Last year, Miss Nee won the EASB Sports-woman award for her overall result in individual and team activities such as badminton, bowling and telematches. She also came in third for the EASB Talent contest, where she was the only magician out of 14 contestants.

After she graduates in 2020, she wants to expand her events business and explore charity projects. She also wants to realise her dream of running a food truck.

But her ultimate goal is "to build an orphanage or shelter in a third-world country, and make life better for underprivileged children".

"If you don't let yourself go, you won't know how far you will rise," she says, citing a motivational quote about life being like a balloon.



Ms Nee says EASB helped to hone her business skills and turned her into a confident person. PHOTOS: TED CHEN



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A Brighter Future



ITE College East is equipped with scaled-down process plants commonly used in industries, to provide scenario-based training in the chemical, oil and gas sectors, so that ITE graduates go into the industry with skills and expectations that fit the industry.

By Karen Sum

Most people will think that travelling to the far ends of Singapore for work is a hassle. Not Kevin Ng. To get to work, he has to take a ferry to Pulau Bukom. "I enjoy taking the ferry to work. It's relaxing and gives me some time to prepare myself before work starts," explains Kevin.

Kevin is a Lead Production Specialist at Shell. He is currently leading a team of 12 and has been with Shell for 14 years and counting. At 38 and married with two young children, life is good for Kevin. But back in secondary school, the future didn't look so promising.

Turning Point

"I never had an interest in books. I was lazy and had no aim in life," Kevin admits. He hung out with the wrong company, dropped out of secondary school, and was a self-professed 'dreamer' even after he had started working. But one day, Kevin realised that his attitude was not going to help him progress in life. Coincidentally, he stumbled upon an ITE Open House advertisement and saw a course that he liked.

That course was Process Operation Control. It was a new course and what it offered was different. That appealed to Kevin and after seeking his father's advice, he decided to sign up for it. Kevin ended up being the pioneer batch from that course. He was impressed with his lecturers and their years of industry experience.

Skilled for Success

"ITE not only prepared me based on the course requirements, it also taught me to be a better person. We were not 'easy' students. Some of

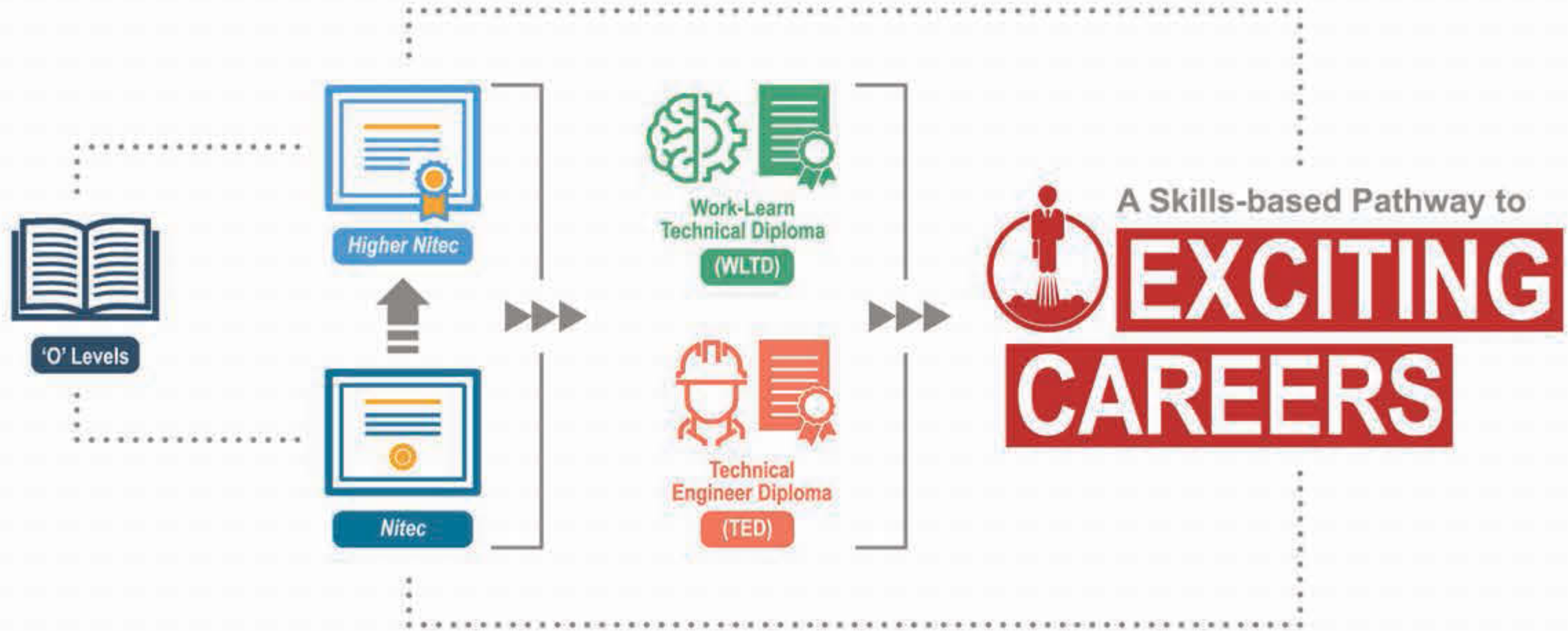
us couldn't cope or found it harder to cope with our studies. But my lecturers befriended us, pushed us and guided us. I also picked up communication skills, which have helped me a lot at work. I am now able to convey my messages to my team members clearly," said Kevin.

Having found his motivation, Kevin went on to excel at ITE. He graduated among the top five per cent in his cohort and immediately found a job. "Even before we graduated, there were many companies queuing up for us!" said Kevin. Industry demands at that time prompted ITE to start the course, and with a fresh batch of graduates trained with the specific skills the industry needed, it was no surprise that Kevin and his fellow course mates quickly found jobs.

Opening Doors

Kevin started as a crude distiller at Shell in 2005. He felt intimidated when he first joined Shell. He soon realised that ITE prepared him well and gained the confidence he needed to do his job well. Kevin has since moved on to different departments, before starting at Utilities and Integration three years ago. Shell has also sponsored Kevin for a Diploma in Applied Science.

Kevin is grateful for the opportunities that an ITE education has brought him. To students considering enrolling at ITE, he has this to say: "You may take a longer route to get to where you want to be, but if you persevere, you will get there. Be focused, be determined."



FROM FUELLING MY AMBITION TO LEADING WITH PASSION

Kevin Ng
Lead Production Specialist
Shell Pulau Bukom Manufacturing Site
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EQUIP FOR LIFE

"The real-life lessons shared by my lecturers were inspiring and got me ready for the workforce, making me the person I am today."

www.ite.edu.sg

BEYOND O LEVELS

Primed to lead

PSB Academy helps student Leu Kai Jun hone his leadership skills

BY LUKE TAN

In secondary school, he stepped up to the plate when a class chairperson was needed. While doing National Service in the navy, he was responsible for allocating manpower and equipment for pontoon operations.

And now as an undergraduate, Mr Leu Kai Jun is president of the Institute of Engineers, Singapore (IES)'s PSB Academy student chapter.

But the 22-year-old did not always have such sure footing.

After completing his National Service in March 2017, the East Spring Secondary School student considered other paths, including business studies. But it was an overseas vacation that brought him clarity.

Mr Leu recalls: "I was invited by my friend to visit his relative's shoe-sole plant in Indonesia. I was intrigued by how the machines could be re-configured to produce soles of different shapes, sizes and hardness levels, and that sparked my interest in mechanical engineering."

After some research, he enrolled in PSB Academy in July 2017 for a one-year diploma in mechanical engineering technology. After completion, he continued at PSB Academy with the Bachelor of Engineering (honours) in the mechanical engineering programme offered by Coventry University.

For one of his modules, Mr Leu did a group project to improve the safety, ease of use and weight of a foldable bicycle's locking mechanism.

He also enjoys the institute's approach to independent learning: "Whenever we face problems, our lecturers will give hints. We ask for guidance only when we have exhausted all options," he says.

"To me, there is a misconception that private educational institutions are less competitive. But I have found that whether you shine as a student depends on how hard you're prepared to work."

In September last year, Mr Leu hit a new high.



Mr Leu is president of the Institute of Engineers, Singapore's PSB Academy student chapter. PHOTO: TED CHEN

He was nominated by student advisers to be president of IES's PSB Academy student chapter, which aims to expose students to industry events, and provide networking and career opportunities. This is the first such IES chapter at a private education institution.

Another post Mr Leu has held since July last year is that of treasurer of the Institution of Engineering and Technology (IET)'s PSB Academy On Campus student chapter, an offshoot of one of the world's largest engineering institutions.

As president, he coordinates and organises events such as workshops, like the one to certify PSB Academy students in SolidWorks, a computer-aided 3D design programme.

And as a student leader, Mr Leu is reaping

benefits beyond academic excellence. "Improving my communication skills and sharpening my command of the English language have helped me do a better job of promoting events and activities, as well as in becoming a better leader."

He hopes to work in the aerospace industry after obtaining his bachelor's degree later this year, and then follow through with postgraduate studies.

He has no doubt that his leadership experiences will come in handy.

"Volunteering with the IES and IET student chapters has broadened both my views and network," he says. "And the advice I have gained from people I meet will shape my vision for my future."

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BEYOND O LEVELS

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At Republic Polytechnic, Mr Lee Quanlong learnt by doing. PHOTO: REPUBLIC POLYTECHNIC

A good sport

Republic Polytechnic graduate Lee Quanlong gamely took on the school's challenges and scored a goal for his career

BY MARY LIM

Mr Lee Quanlong, 31, has a job that many dream of — he works in partnership development with Arsenal Football Club and is responsible for establishing commercial partnerships in the Greater China region.

But much like how football players go through endless hours of practice drills before they land in the big leagues, it took Mr Lee a lot of hard work to get there.

Driven to land a dynamic career in the sports industry, he wasted no time after his O levels. In 2006, he enrolled in Republic Polytechnic (RP) and was part of its pioneer batch of Diploma in Sports and Leisure Management students.

"I was excited by the many initiatives being planned to rejuvenate the sports scene in Singapore then," he says, "such as the first Formula One night race in 2008, the inaugural Youth Olympics in 2010 and the new Sports Hub in 2012."

Having an advantage

Mr Lee says the course, (now known as Diploma in Sport Management) — which offered modules such as sports business, events and facilities management, sports law and sports management — equipped him with essential knowledge and skillsets required to put together successful sporting events.

There were also complementary modules such as sports sociology and sports psychology, which aimed to give a better understanding of how sport has shaped society.

But the "big bonus" that he most looked forward to at RP was its Problem-Based Learning approach.

"We learnt key concepts and theories through case studies. This allowed us to grasp the main topic of the lesson and apply what we learn to solve each case study. If we weren't sure about something, we checked and cross-referenced with different sources before deciding," he explains.

"We had to work in groups. Besides putting teamwork into practice, we could develop our own opinions and share these with others. Having to do presentations in class helped us become more self-confident."

At the end of each lesson, students had to submit their daily reflections.

"As I considered how the day went and how I rectified my mistakes, I could reinforce what I learnt in class. Reflection remains a huge part of my life. Having to juggle many tasks and responsibilities, it's good to sometimes step back and slow down, and assess our progress and priorities."

A go-getter

What Mr Lee gained most from the approach was to learn by doing. It led him outside the classroom — to the Standard Chartered Marathon 2007 where he was a Start Line Key Volunteer.

His can-do attitude impressed event organiser Enterprise Sports Group, and he went on to do two internships there.

Discussions during class frequently revolved around the administration preparation of 2008's Summer Olympic Games in Beijing.

To proactively put his academic learning into practice, he wrote to Singapore National Olympic Council for an internship. He got it, as well as sneak peeks into the national athlete selection process.

In 2009, Mr Lee graduated from RP among its top 5 per cent. He went on to complete a degree in sport science and management at Nanyang Technological University in 2014.

"As a student, I was driven to learn something new. Now I'm driven to put my best work forward to contribute to the industry."

Join RP's Parents' Talk today to gain valuable tips on applying to a polytechnic through the Joint Admissions Exercise, and learn more about RP's full-time courses.

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BEYOND O LEVELS

James Cook University's foundation programme prepared psychology undergraduate Shania Chandan Mahtani for the rigours of tertiary life



PHOTO: JAMES COOK UNIVERSITY

Getting a leg up

BY LI YIMING

The world in a classroom — that would succinctly describe Ms Shania Chandan Mahtani's experience at James Cook University (JCU). The eight-month-long Pre-University Foundation Programme she enrolled in more than provided direct entry to her desired course. She also gained invaluable benefits from being part of a multicultural environment. Students hailed from countries such as India, Indonesia and Vietnam, and she learnt to appreciate the school's cosmopolitan culture. JCU, she says, also encourages students to learn from the vibrant community. The 17-year-old says: "Although I experienced a mini culture shock when I first entered the university, I eventually became more comfortable in my new surroundings as I had the opportunity to make friends with people from all over the world. "Meeting people from diverse backgrounds, who have different

perspectives and life experiences, is transformative because it has made me more open-minded. Being in JCU has taught me that the world is a small place, and despite our differences, we are all interconnected." Understanding people from different backgrounds, she adds, is relevant to her subject because making sense of the thought processes of someone from a different culture is integral in psychology. Ms Mahtani, who completed the foundation programme in October last year, has moved on to the Bachelor of Psychological Science programme. She will graduate in November 2020. She has always been interested in psychology. After completing her O levels, she researched various institutions and settled on JCU. She found the school reputable and its psychology programme, which is endorsed by Australian Psychology Accreditation Council, well recognised. Of her aspirations, she says: "I would like to devote my time and energy to help people overcome

adversity, increase their well-being, and help them realise their full potential. Being fresh out of secondary school, Ms Mahtani faced a steep learning curve. But the foundation programme, she says, was a good primer and readied her for higher learning. At first, she struggled with her assignments as she was unaccustomed to writing lengthy essays, and was unsure of the structure required of academic writing. Her tutors' willingness to guide her left a deep impression. "My tutors were more than happy to clarify my doubts. Although it took me a while to understand the format, they were very patient with me." She also picked up essential skills needed for university life. "Studying at JCU has made me more independent. I juggled multiple assignments and deadlines, and developed good time management skills." For those who are at the crossroads after their O-level examinations, she says: "It is important to study a field that interests you and in an area where you can make a difference."

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Dogged determination

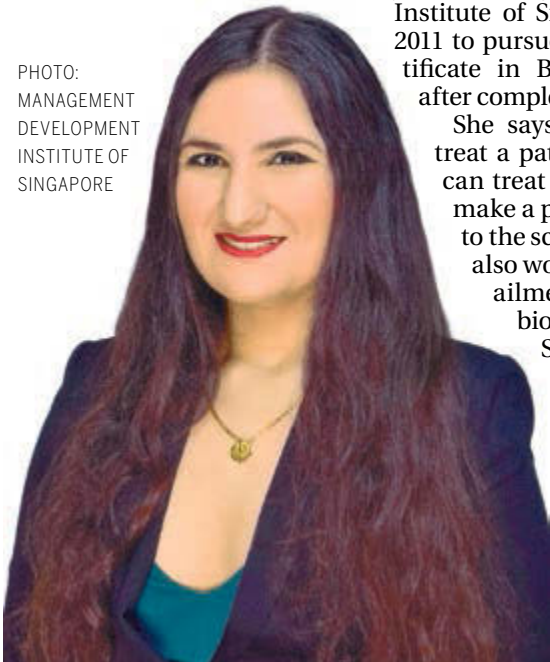
Neuroscience student Kiran Kaur picks MDIS in working towards her dream of opening a research lab

BY JOSHUA WONG

Every now and then, you meet someone who is utterly focused in life, like Ms Kiran Kaur. Her interest in biomedical sciences and their impact on people's well-being put her on a trajectory in which she has single-mindedly ticked off the skills she needs to achieve her ultimate goal: Research on brain cancer therapy. After getting her bachelor's degree, she obtained a Master of Business Administration so that when she heads her own research lab one day, she will understand not only the scientific but also the business aspects of running it. Currently working on her PhD in neuroscience at Monash University in Melbourne, Australia, Ms Kaur hopes to open her own lab by next year. And she is only 25. Her drive to succeed got a kickstart when she joined Management Development Institute of Singapore (MDIS) in 2011 to pursue a Foundation Certificate in Biomedical Sciences after completing her O levels. She says: "A physician can treat a patient, but a scientist can treat a population. So, to make a positive contribution to the scientific arena and to also work towards cures for ailments, I chose to study biomedical sciences." She was drawn to MDIS for its vibrant campus, modern facilities and good location. More importantly, it had the right credentials: It is certified by EduTrust, a certification scheme offered by the

Committee for Private Education (an agency under SkillsFuture Singapore). After her Foundational Certificate, Ms Kaur obtained a Bachelor of Science (Honours) degree in Biomedical Sciences in 2015, and then enrolled for an MDIS MBA programme to hone her business acumen, completing her degree in 2017. "MDIS made me an independent researcher. I learnt how to source for information, obtain data and discuss my findings with my lecturers to strengthen my knowledge," she says. Ms Kaur earned a first-class honours degree, and was personally commended by an external examiner on the confidence and knowledge she exhibited in her viva voce (oral interview). She also topped her cohort for the Applied Business Project during her master's programme. She is swift to recommend MDIS to others, saying: "If you want quality education with friendly lecturers who are passionate about your success as a student, MDIS is the ideal choice. The courses not only give you subject knowledge to succeed in your field, but also equip you with life skills. "My lecturers were encouraging, and their constant support was a morale booster, inspiring me to keep working towards my goals."

PHOTO: MANAGEMENT DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE OF SINGAPORE



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From accountant to head of a leading coffee chain in Singapore, Mr Patrick Kwok FCPA (Aust.), General Manager of Starbucks Singapore, feels he would probably not have gotten to where he is today if not for his CPA designation. Mr Kwok began his career in 1993 as an assistant accountant at McDonalds in Hong Kong. It was at this early stage that he embarked on the CPA Program, as he felt it would be an essential foundation for business. He has come a long way since then. "The CPA Program equipped me with essential accounting skills and technical knowledge to develop insights regarding business operations, and envisage the overall direction of the organisation's future developments. This is key for strategic management and business leaders," says Mr Kwok. He adds, "Accounting and finance are the languages of business. CPA Australia is the great business language translator for decision makers and business leaders. Many CPAs have contributed beyond their traditional accounting and auditing functions. You gain exposure to different industries, and CPA Australia professional insights enable you to diversify into value-added functions like consultants, analysts, business and strategic leaders." The CPA Program is internationally recognised and equips professionals to tackle challenging accounting, finance or business situations faced in today's global marketplace. Providing more than a technical accounting focus, the CPA Program goes

beyond the numbers, teaching essential skills to reach the next level in leadership, strategy and business. Mr Kwok feels that the strength of the CPA Program is in making use of contemporary and internationally relevant material to provide students with an understanding of dynamic issues facing today's organisations. The core subjects, Financial Reporting, Ethics & Governance, Strategic Management Accounting and Global Strategy & Leadership are tailor-made for developing business advisors and leaders with regional and global perspectives. "Particularly in this digital era, the accountant needs to know how to gather and analyse data to provide forecasts and sound business advice that enable effective decision making and strategic management," says Mr Kwok. Mr Patrick Kwok FCPA (Aust.) says that today's accountant needs to be able to provide forecasts and sound business advice for effective decision making in this digital era. Mr Kwok studied the CPA Program through distance learning, a mode of study that offers working professionals plenty of flexibility. To cater to different learning styles, CPA Australia has appointed Registered Tuition Providers to offer classes for



Mr Patrick Kwok FCPA (Aust.) says that today's accountant needs to be able to provide forecasts and sound business advice for effective decision making in this digital era.

candidates who prefer face-to-face learning in preparation for the CPA Program exams. These classes meet stringent quality standards and are aligned to study materials approved by CPA Australia. In Singapore, candidates can also opt for the CPA Program – Full Time. Introduced in January this year at Kaplan Learning Institute, candidates can complete the CPA Program in two semesters. Subject matter experts provide guidance through exercises, discussions and feedback in a structured classroom environment. Mr Zack Lua, a Finance Executive at Bond M & E Pte Ltd, embarked on the CPA Program – Full Time so that he can focus on the course and complete it within one year. Mr Lua aims to attain his CPA designation to equip himself with the relevant skills and knowledge to advance in his career. He is fortunate to have a supportive employer who allowed him the flexibility of a part-time role at work while studying for the CPA Program. To prepare for the exams, Mr Lua makes full use of the extensive learning resources provided through the online learning portal. "I refer to the soft copy of the study guide when I am commuting to and from work. Additional reading materials are available for us to enhance our knowledge and we can apply what we have learnt through practising simulation scenarios. In addition, CPA Australia staff are very helpful and responsive. Whenever I have a query regarding the CPA Program, I am always able to get

a prompt reply from them via email," he says. His efforts scored him two distinctions in his first semester. "My experience with the CPA Program so far has been great. I have made many friends from different nationalities and I have already been able to apply what I have learnt from the CPA Program at work." Mr Zack Lua aims to attain his CPA designation to equip himself with the relevant skills and knowledge to advance in his career. Find out more at CPA Australia's annual career expo on 26 January 2019. Details available at cpaaustralia.com.au/professionalsession (Article written by Joanna Chek)



Mr Zack Lua aims to attain his CPA designation to equip himself with the relevant skills and knowledge to advance in his career.





PHOTO: TED CHEN

His winning mindset

Student Seah Jia Cheng is determined to excel — and he gets all the support he needs from SIM GE

BY TEO KUAN YEE

Competitions such as uSPRINT excite Mr Seah Jia Cheng (above).

The 21-year-old, who is pursuing his diploma in management studies at the Singapore Institute of Management Global Education (SIM GE), was encouraged by the institute to take part in the external competition for greater industry exposure and to develop his soft skills.

The inter-polytechnic investment and trading competition organised by UOB Kay Hian promotes financial literacy in young people.

This opportunity gave him access to a virtual platform to execute investment strategies, apply market theories and experience equities trading using live market prices quoted on the Singapore Exchange.

"I gained vast insights into the finance sector that I can build my future career on," he says.

Getting ahead

Even as a teenager, Mr Seah was determined

to get ahead — and motivate others to do the same.

He used to challenge his friends to see who could score better grades. These days, helping a pal, either through coaching or persuading him to sign up for a course, makes him happy.

Enrolling in SIM GE, too, was a natural decision.

He says: "I felt that, as a Normal Academic student, I had already spent an additional year obtaining my O levels, compared to some of my peers. Pursuing a diploma at SIM GE would help me progress faster to getting my bachelor's degree."

The programme at SIM GE enables him to complete his diploma in just 15 months, instead of the three years it would take if he opted for the route offered by local polytechnics. This means Mr Seah will graduate in June this year. He began his studies at SIM GE in April 2018 after completing his O Levels at Queenstown Secondary School. "Furthermore, SIM GE's partner univer-

sities from different countries offer a suite of programmes that I can pursue for my undergraduate studies," he adds.

If he chooses to pursue a business degree at SIM GE with its partner universities after his diploma studies, Mr Seah could potentially be fast-tracked to the second year of a degree programme.

Enriching environment

His first group project, though challenging, was made easier with the support of the SIM Student Learning Centre staff and peer leaders who helped him pick up skills, such as Microsoft Office.

But Mr Seah's thirst for knowledge is not just limited to the classroom.

Eager to gain industry knowhow, he seeks out the various perspectives of his lecturers, many of whom also teach in the local universities and polytechnics.

He says: "My lecturers are always willing to help as long as you show that you want to learn. More importantly, I get to hear what they think of the work industry and how one can progress to higher positions."

SIM GE also has close to 80 student clubs for a well-balanced, vibrant school life. Mr Seah is an active member of two — dance club DreamWerkz and Toastmasters, which will hone his public-speaking skills.

He would recommend SIM GE to others without a second's hesitation: "Studying in a leading private education institution gives me greater exposure to international students, which allows me to learn more about different cultures. We also discover exciting career opportunities whenever companies participate in the Career Fair organised by SIM GE."

"To my knowledge, many SIM GE graduates find jobs within six months of graduation and the employability rate is healthy."

GET IN TOUCH

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Guo Meiling
Diploma in Restaurant and Culinary Operations
School of Hospitality
2014 Graduate
Currently working as an Assistant Manager at Paliza Club, Marina Bay Sands, Singapore

“Republic Polytechnic was where I learnt specific skill sets which allowed me to kickstart my career in the hospitality industry. In my pursuit of a diploma, I gained necessary work and life skills, which I could effectively apply to realise my dream career.”

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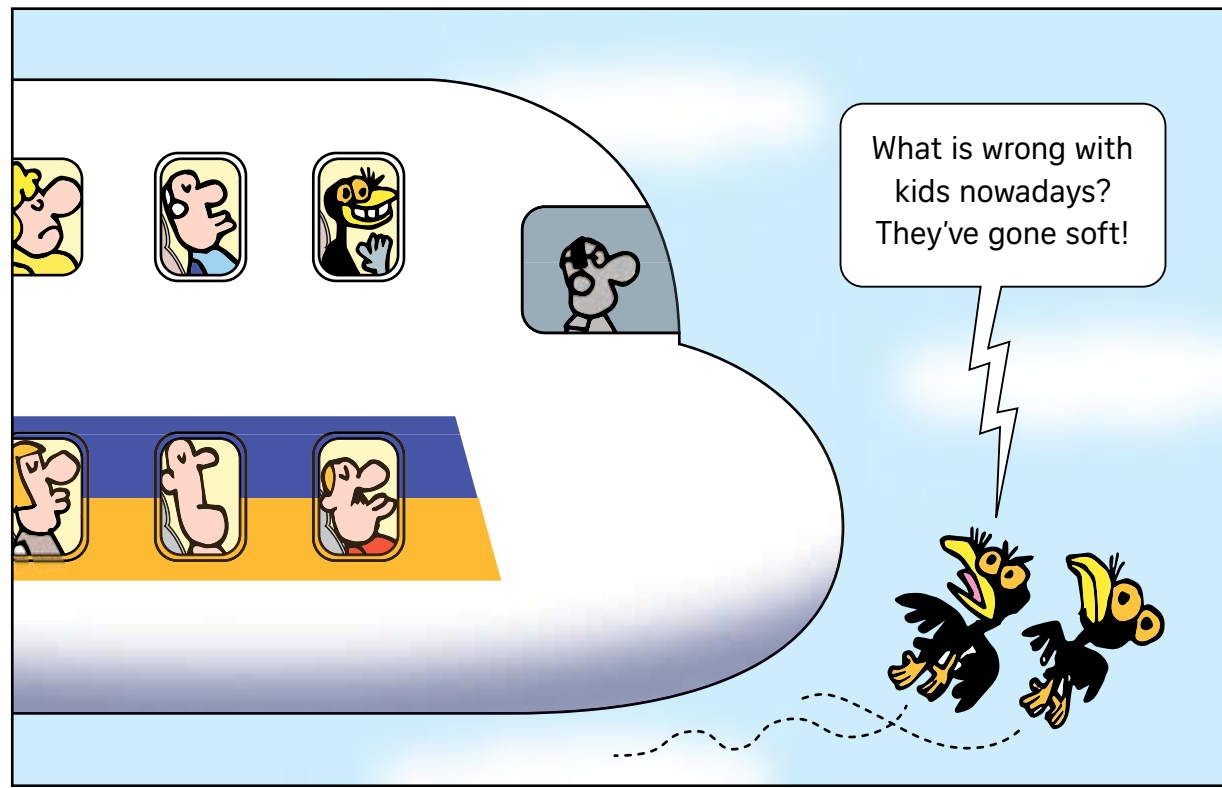
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FORUM

mriel's TAKE

Bird found taking SIA Singapore-London business class flight



Asean should make its voice heard now

I hope Indonesia's vigorous voice pertaining to the Indo-Pacific framework spurs other Asean members to move from their silent or indecisive stance to a take-charge posture (Indonesia wants Asean to be axis of Indo-Pacific strategy; Jan 10).

With the re-establishment of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue between the US, Australia, India and Japan, their interests in the Indo-Pacific have heightened.

While Asean has been right to remain circumspect and distance itself from great-power politics and rivalries, a prolonged silence and

lack of consensus might end up doing equal, if not more, harm.

Indecision is a decision in itself; besides, the persistent lack of consensus can make Asean look fractured and disunited.

While the Free and Open Indo Pacific (FOIP) model proposed by the Quad is still taking shape, Asean would do well to seize upon the concept's infant stage, and vocalise in unison and clarity the role it wishes to upkeep or assume in this region where their interests are heavily vested.

If Asean members procrastinate

and wait till it becomes a full-fledged beast before speaking up, it might be a tad too late as they find themselves losing grip on the leverage they have spent years curating.

I am not suggesting that Asean should officially endorse the FOIP, but I think it might be prudent for Asean to engage with the Quad, keep its voice active and opinions heard, so that it can uphold an influencing role as others go about moulding policies for this region.

This will help to better ensure that Asean interests are tended to – and not compromised – in the dynamic development of our regional architecture.

Lily Ong (Madam)

Time S'pore responded like-for-like to Malaysia

Our political leaders may have misread Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad.

The man interprets restraint as contemptible weakness to be trampled over. He only understands, indeed respects, strength. The only way to bring him back to reality is to respond to every provocation of his in kind, while taking care not to initiate any on our own.

Hence we should immediately and unilaterally extend the Tuas port limits beyond the 1979 Malaysian claim line, to the same extent as the Johor port limits have been unilaterally extended beyond the line.

We should then anchor the same number of Singapore government vessels in the waters beyond the line as the number of Malaysian government vessels that have been anchored in our waters. We will increase or reduce this number in

accordance with the number of Malaysian vessels in our waters.

Our enforcement agencies should stand by to take the same action against the Malaysian vessels as whatever action that may be taken by the Malaysian authorities against our vessels.

For good measure, one of our ministers can visit our vessels to see how our security forces are carrying out their duties, in the belief that he or she is in our waters.

What if the second-time Malaysian prime minister initiates further provocations, like banning all export of food to Singapore?

Our government will have failed us if it has not had a food security contingency plan in place for such a scenario.

So that would be as good a time as any to put the plan to the test.

How about the ultimate provocation: water? That question

has been answered by our late founding prime minister and his answer is as valid now as when it was first given.

To fellow Singaporeans who find me reckless, irresponsible or naive, I invite them to ask themselves this question: When push comes to shove, are we 100 per cent certain that we will not blink first?

Whether we like it or not, our neighbours will always tempt us with this question and will continue to do so for as long as they are not completely sure of our answer.

As long as we ourselves have the slightest lingering doubt about our answer, we will never be a truly sovereign nation that can stand straight among our neighbours.

We and our children will forever be subservient to their wishes, even if such servitude is subtle and only infrequently enforced.

Cheng Shooong Tat

Teach students about S'pore-Malaysia relations

Students in Singapore, from upper secondary to tertiary, should be taught something about Singapore-Malaysia relations.

This serves to expose to them the "slippery dynamics" of Malaysian politics and, hence, not take our security for granted.

Take, for example, the latest attempt to talk about the maritime dispute: even before any significant headway was made, it already slipped back to its former status of aggressiveness when the Johor politician visited the trespassing ship off Tuas.

As we are taking away examinations for certain levels to

enable in-depth learning and holistic development, the study of Singapore-Malaysia relationships forms an integral part of growing up as well-informed students.

It will make them better-equipped adults in future, unlike some adults I have spoken to who hardly know anything about this subject and think that good neighbourly relations with our northern neighbour is a Najib-based fact of life.

Only then will the boys do their national service seriously when it is time for enlistment into the army.

If uneducated about these matters, they might even grow up

one day gullibly believing some Malaysian press reports which allege that it is Singapore, rather than Malaysia, which has all the while been the troublemaker and the ungracious country.

Our students might not even know we had been helping Johor in its water crisis time and again, without taking undue advantage of Johor or Malaysia despite existing acrimonious political climate.

Anyone who follows the step-by-step developments will know any allegation of Singapore's ungraciousness is furthest from the truth.

Phillip Tan Fong Lip



Telling it like it is, from the ground

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ST Photo: Kua Chee Siong

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Capturing life in the Rohingya refugee camps in Cox's Bazar in Bangladesh were The Straits Times' associate editor Rahul Pathak (left), artist Pradip Kumar Sikdar (middle), and executive photojournalist Kua Chee Siong. The ST team spent nine days in the Rohingya camps in July 2018.



Shocking fee quoted for quick surgery

I am a 71-year-old general practitioner and recently had an operation at the Singapore National Eye Centre (SNEC).
Though I am fully covered by private insurance, I find the cost of medical care in Singapore ridiculously expensive.
On recommendation I first went to the National University Hospital (NUH) to have my glaucoma and cataract condition looked into.
I was recommended an operation – a day surgery, no stay-in, about 40 minutes – to have the cataract

removed and a pump insertion for the glaucoma to relieve the pressure on my right eye.
The fee quoted was a staggering \$19,000. I was very uncomfortable with what I would be charged and decided to seek a second opinion at the SNEC, which quoted me a fee of \$9,000.
I would like to know:
• Why are the surgical fees that high, given that the operation was not complicated and would take only 40 minutes?
Perhaps it is due to the expensive

implants?
• Why is there such a huge disparity in prices between NUH and SNEC? I understand they use different implants. Still one can't help but suspect profiteering.
This episode is highly relevant given the recent fracas at the SNEC concerning MediShield Life payout, even though my case is completely private and has no government subsidy.
I hope the relevant authorities will shed some light on this.
Wong Kai Peng (Dr)

Time for Scoot to step up

It is completely unacceptable that since Nov 26, Scoot has had about 10 major disruptions which have led to delays of up to 56 hours for affected passengers (Scoot flight turns back to Changi soon after take-off; Jan 9).
Mr Gerard de Vaz said that for an airline a technical delay does not constitute a "crisis" (Not fair to compare Scoot and SIA; Jan 9). He also said that Scoot is a low-cost carrier and offers "no-frills" service.
However, I wonder if a series of technical delays is bad enough to be considered a crisis for an airline.
People taking budget airlines are aware that they will not enjoy the same service standards as non-budget airlines.
However, it does not mean that they should expect to receive

sub-standard treatment when their plane is grounded and they are left stranded at the airport. They are entitled to be worried and anxious.
In 2017, Scoot chief executive Lee Lik Hsin said: "The industry model has changed. It's no longer the bad old budget airlines of the past, leaving you stranded. We all take care of our customers."
If that assertion is to be taken as a commitment to provide better services as a budget airline, Mr Lee should now take full responsibility to address this series of disruptions which have negatively impacted Scoot's reputation.
Whatever one may wish to call this series of disruptions, it is time for the senior management of Scoot to deal with it decisively.
Charles Ho

Not everyone should go to university

In the 1960s and 70s, a very small percentage of the population were graduates, which made their degrees valuable and made it easier for them to find jobs.
In 2017, however, there is a much larger percentage of the population with tertiary education. When the number of people with degrees increases, the qualification becomes less special in the eyes of employers.
A university degree is one of the most expensive purchases a person makes in his life and there is no guarantee that one will succeed in the environment or secure employment.
The university environment may not be for everyone. Some people may benefit much more from learning a trade or starting a business as opposed to taking out a large loan to go to university.
If a person is undecided, he should not go to university immediately after junior college or polytechnic. He can always get a job and save money.
Meritocracy should not be defined only in terms of intelligence, but also in terms of skills.
Cheng Choon Fei

Don't blame education system for students' bad behaviour

It is not fair to hold our education system solely responsible for producing ill-behaved children (Our learning culture needs a reset, by Mr Seah Yam Meng; Jan 2).
Children are strongly influenced by the adults they are in contact with before the start of their school life.
It is important for parents to be aware of their role in the inculcation of good values in their children.
It is also impossible to impart positive values in a fixed way or time. The opportunity can arise at any time during the daily activities of the children.
If negative values are detected early enough, there is a chance that such values can be corrected. Otherwise, such values will stay ingrained in them.
When parents and teachers have their roles clearly defined, they can complement each other in inculcating good values in children instead of pushing that very important duty to each other,

leaving the young and innocent open to the influence of others.
As our education system requires students to work hard, a negligible number of students might use wrong values to their advantage, such as by sabotaging others.
The education system can be blamed for instilling selfish behaviour in students only if the majority of them are sabotaging one another.
In fact, hard work itself is a positive value and the high expectations of our education system also offer students the chance to develop endurance and learn to manage obstacles in life.
This will come in useful when they are older.
Therefore, it is just as important for us to have a balanced view of the effects of our education system on the values of our younger generation so that we can head in the right direction in improving the education system
Yeo Boon Eng (Ms)

OnFacebook

Should cyclists be made to adhere to traffic laws like other motorists?

If you're going to be on the road, at the very least you should have passed the basic theory test.
Eugene Tan

Yes, if they're going to share the roads with people who have to go through proper education, as well as follow a strict set of rules, why should they be allowed to run amok?
Rein them in, register them, and take them to task if they flout the rules.
Joel Luo

Every road user from drivers, motorcyclists, cyclists, e-scooter riders to pedestrians should obey traffic laws. They keep everyone safe.
Ho Weng Kok Mike

Do you think government intervention is needed for bike-sharing services to succeed in Singapore?

Why should bike-sharing services succeed in Singapore? How do they fit in with the overall transport policies here?
James Lui

The Government needs to intervene not only to ensure the success of bike-sharing, but also to ensure a level playing field for operators as well as ensure people's interests are being looked after.
George Wong

The problem still lies with users, we can see bicycles being indiscriminately parked wherever the users deem convenient.
Sim Sunny

Should the four new statues of Sang Nila Utama, Tan Tock Seng, Munshi Abdullah and Naraina Pillai by the Singapore River be kept there permanently?

Isn't that what museums are for?
Andy Wee

They should stay. They provide a more interesting perspective to our history.
Francis Cheong

Keep them, but spread them out to tell stories.
Nagathisen Katahenggam

No, this place should only have Sir Stamford Raffles. With all the other statues there, it will make the place lose its original theme and it will look messy. The place also has no significance to other statues.
Billon Wong

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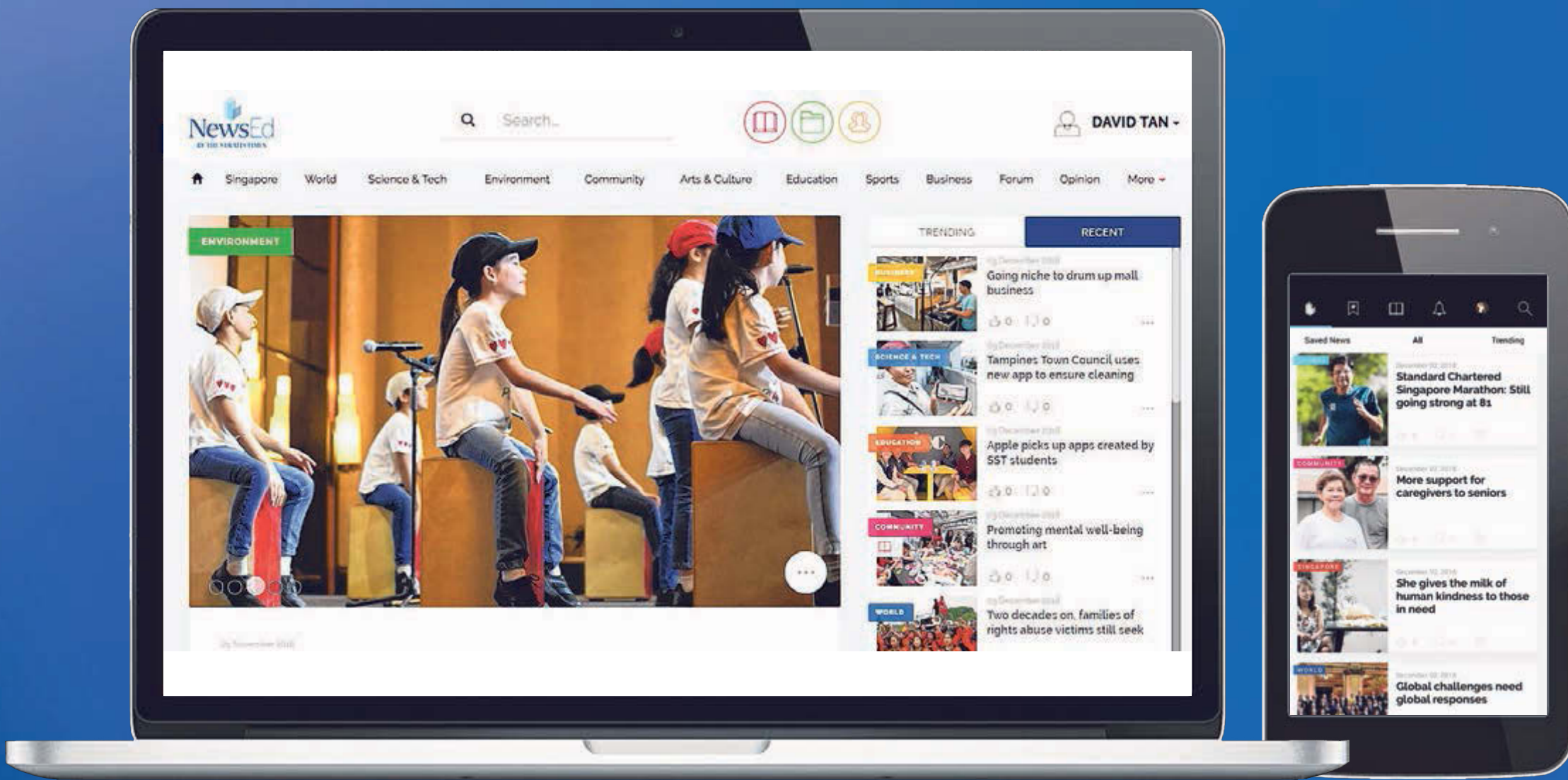


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ST FILE PHOTO

A photo of Great World Amusement Park taken on July 28, 1962. With Gay World and New World, the three lit up Singapore's nightlife in the 1950s and 60s. Great World closed in 1964, but the cinemas, cabaret and restaurants there continued operations until 1978.

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